

FULCANELLI

MASTER ALCHEMIST



The Dwellings
of the
Philosophers



ROUEN - THE MANSION OF BOURGTHEROULDE
Salamander (16th Century)

The Dwellings

of the

Philosophers

FULCANELLI

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BOOK ONE

I

HISTORY AND MONUMENT

Paradoxical in its manifestations, disconcerting in its signs, the Middle Ages proposes to the sagacity of its admirers the resolution of a singular misconception. How to reconcile the unreconcilable? How to adjust the testimony of the historical facts to that of medieval art works?

The chroniclers depict this unfortunate period in the darkest colors. For several centuries there is nothing but invasions, wars, famines, epidemics. And yet the monuments --- faithful and sincere witnesses of these nebulous times --- bear no mark of such scourges. Much to the contrary they appear to have been built in the enthusiasm of a powerful inspiration of ideal and faith by a people happy to live in the midst of a flourishing and strongly organized society.

Must we doubt the veracity of historical accounts, the authenticity of the events which they report, and believe along with the popular wisdom of nations, that happy peoples have no history? Unless, without refuting en masse all of history, we prefer to discover the justification pf medieval darkness in the relative lack of incidents.

Be that as it may, it remains undeniable is that all the Gothic buildings without exception reflect a serenity and expansiveness and a nobility without equal. If, in particular, we examine the expression of statues, we will quickly be edified by the peaceful character, the pure tranquility that emanates from these figures. All are calm and smiling, welcoming and innocent. Lapidary humanity, silent and well-bred. Women have that portliness which rather indicates, in their models, the excellence of rich and substantial nourishment. Children are plum, replete, and blooming. Priests, deacons, Capuchin monks, purveyor lay-brothers, clerks, and chorus singers, all show a jovial face or the pleasant figure of their portly dignity. Their interpreters --- those marvelous and modest carvers of images --- do not deceive us and could not be mistaken. They choose their prototypes from daily life among people who move around them and in the midst of whom they themselves live. A number of these figures randomly found in narrow streets, taverns, schools, sacristies, workshops, may be altogether marked or overdone, but in a picturesque tone, with a concern for character, for the sense of joy, for generous lines. Grotesque, you may say, but joyously grotesque and full of teaching. Satires of people enjoying laughter. Drinking, singing, and fond of good living. Masterpieces of a realist school, profoundly human and certain of its mastery, conscious of its means, and yet unaware of what pain, misery, oppression, or slavery might be. This is so true that, search as you may, question the ogival statuary, you will never discover a figure of Christ whose expression reveals true suffering. Along with us, you will recognize that the latomi ⁽¹⁾ worked tremendously hard to give their crucified figures a grave physiognomy without always succeeding. The best ones, barely emaciated, have closed eyelids and seem to be resting. On out cathedrals the scenes of the Last Judgment show grimacing demons, distorted, monstrous, more comical than terrible; as far as the damned, the benumbed accursed are concerned, they are cooking in their pots over a slow heat without useless regret or genuine suffering.

These free, virile, and healthy images evidence that the artists of the Middle Ages did not know the depressing spectacle of human afflictions. Had the people suffered, had the masses moaned in misfortune, the monuments would have kept a memento of it. Yet we know that art, the higher expression of civilized humanity, can freely develop only under the cover of a stable and sure peace. As it is with science, art cannot exercise its genius in the atmosphere of troubled societies. This applies to all elevated manifestations of human thought; revolutions, wars, upheavals are disastrous to them. They demand security born of order and concord in order to grow, to bloom, and to bear fruit. Such strong reasons urge us to accept, with great circumspection, the medieval events recounted by History. We confess that the description "of a sequence of calamities, disasters, and accumulated ruins over 146 years" seems to us truly excessive. Something is inexplicable amiss here, since it is precisely during this unfortunate One Hundred Years' War, which lasted from 1337 to 1453, that the richest buildings of flamboyant style were built. It is the culminating point, the apogee of form and boldness, the marvelous phase ~~where~~ spirit, the divine flame, imposes its signature on the last creations of Gothic thought. It is the time where the great basilicas were completed; in religious architecture, other important collegiate or monasterial buildings were also being raised: the abbeys of Solesmes, of Cluny, of Saint Riquier, the Chartreuse of Dijon, Saint-Wulfran d'Abbeville, Saint Etienne de Beauvais, etc. We see remarkable civil edifices rising from the earth, from the Hospice of Beaune to the law courts of Rouen and the town hall of Compiègne; from the mansions built nearly everywhere by Jacques Coeur to the belfries of free cities, Bethune, Douai, Dunkerque, etc. In our big cities, the small streets dig their narrow bed under an agglomeration of cantilevered gables, turrets and balconies, sculpted wooden houses and stone dwellings with delicately ornate facades. Everywhere trades are developing under the protection of medieval corporations; everywhere guildmen vie with one another in their skill; everywhere emulation multiplies masterpieces. The university has turned out brilliant students and its renown spreads throughout the old world; famous doctors, illustrious scientists disseminate, propagate the blessings of science and philosophy; in the silence of the laboratory spagyrist amass materials which will later serve as the foundation for our modern chemistry; great Adepts give hermetic truth a new soaring flight... What ardor unfolded in all the branches of human activity! And what wealth, what fecundity, what powerful faith, what trust in the future transpire beneath this desire to build, create, search, and discover in the midst of a full-fledged invasion in this miserable country of France submitted to foreign domination and which knows all the horrors of an interminable war!

In truth, we do not understand...

And thus is elucidated the reason why our preference remains vested in the Middle Ages as it is revealed to us by Gothic buildings rather than in the same period as it is described by historians.

For it is easy to fabricate texts and documents out of nothing, old charters with warm patinas, parchments and archaic-looking seals, even a few sumptuous books of hours, annotated in their margins, beautifully illuminated with locks, borders, and miniatures. The Montmartre district of Paris delivers to whoever desires it, according to the price offered, the unknown Rembrandt or the authentic Teniers. A skilled artisan of the Halles district of Paris can shape with a staggering verve and mastery little gold Egyptian divinities and massive bronze statues, marvelous imitations over which some antique dealers fight. Who does not remember the infamous Tiara of Saitaphernes... Falsification and counterfeiting are as old as the hills, and history, which abhors chronological vacuums, sometimes had to call them to its rescue. A very learned Jesuit of the 17th century, Father Jean Hardouin, did not fear to denounce as spurious numerous Greek and Roman coins and medals coined during the Renaissance and

buried with the aim to fill in large historical gaps. Anatole de Montaiglon ⁽²⁾ informs us that in 1639 Jacques de Bie published a folio volume with illustrations called: *The Families of France, Illustrated by the Monuments of Ancient and Modern Medals*, which, according to him, "contains more invented medals than real ones". Let us agree that in order to give history the documentation it was lacking, Jacques de Bie utilized a more rapid and more economical process than that denounced by Father Hardouin. Victor Hugo ⁽³⁾, citing the four best-known histories of France around 1830 --- those of Dupleix, Mezeray, Vely, and Father Daniel --- says of the latter that the author, "a Jesuit famous for his descriptions of battles, completed in 20 years a history which has no other merit than erudition and in which the Count of Boulainvilliers found no less than 10,000 errors". We know that Caligula, in the year 40 AD, had the tower of Odre built near Boulogne-sur-Mer "to deceive future generations on the subject of the supposed raid of Caligula on Great Britain" ⁽⁴⁾. Converted into a lighthouse (turre ardens) by one of his successors, the tower of Odre collapsed in 1645.

What historian can give us the reason --- superficial or profound --- invoked by the sovereigns of England to justify their qualification and title of Kings of France which they kept until the 18th century? And yet English money from this period still bears the imprint of such a pretense ⁽⁵⁾.

Formerly, on the school benches, we were taught that the first French King was called Pharamond and the date of his accession to the throne was determined at 420 AD. Today the royal genealogy begins with Clodion le Chevu (Clodion the Hairy) because his father, Pharamond, actually never ruled. But in those distant times of the 5th century, are we so certain of the authenticity of the documents pertaining to Clodion's doings? Will they not also be contested some day before they are relegated to the domain of legends and fables?

In Huysmans' view, history is the "most solemn of lies and the most childish of deceits... Events are for a man of talent nothing but a spring-board of ideas and style, since they are all mitigated or aggravated according to the needs of a cause or according to the temperament of the writer who handles them. As far as documents which support them are concerned, it is even worse, since none of them is irreducible and all are reviewable. If they are not just apocryphal, other no less certain documents can be unearthed later which contradict them, waiting in turn to be devalued by the unearthing of yet other no less certain archives" ⁽⁶⁾.

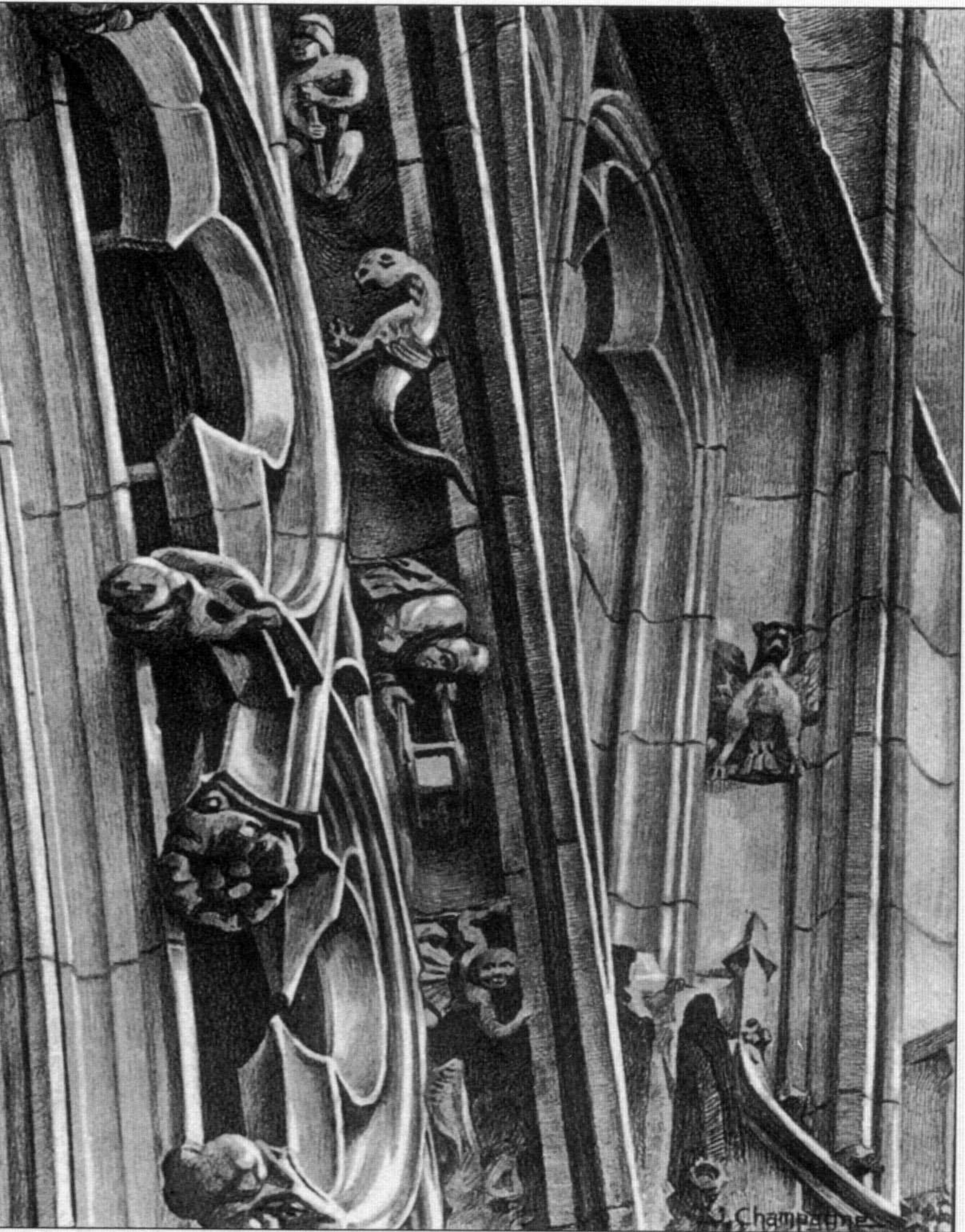
The tombs of historical personalities are also sources of information which is subject to controversy. We have been made aware of this fact more than once ⁽⁷⁾. In 1922, the inhabitants of Bergamo had a very unpleasant surprise. Could they believe that their local celebrity, that fiery soldier of fortune, Bartholomeo Coleoni, who filled the 15th century Italian annals with his bellicose whims, was nothing but a legendary shadow? And yet, following a hunch of the king who was visiting Bergamo, the municipality had the ornate mausoleum of the famous equestrian statue moved, had the tomb opened, and all those in attendance discovered, not without tremendous surprise, that it was empty... In France at least we do not push offhandedness so far; authentic or not, our tombs hold bones. Amedee de Ponthieu ⁽⁸⁾ tells us that the sarcophagus of Francois Myron, magistrate of Paris in 1604, was found during the destruction of the house bearing the address 13 rue Arcole, a building raised on the foundations of the Church Sainte-Marine in which he had been buried. "The lead coffin", wrote the author, "shaped like a compressed ellipse... The epitaph had been erased. When the coffin lid was raised, only a skeleton was found surrounded by a blackish soot mixed with dust... Strangely enough, neither the insignias of his charge, nor his sword, nor his ring were discovered, not even traces of his coat of arms... Yet the Commission of Fine Arts, through the lips of its experts, declared that it was indeed the great Parisian magistrate, and

these illustrious relics were taken down into the crypts of Notre-Dame". A similarly valuable account is mentioned by Fernand Bournon in his book *Paris Atlas*. "For your information, we shall only mention the house located on Quai des Fleurs bearing the numbers 9-11 and which an inscription, without a shadow of authenticity or even of verisimilitude, indicates it to be the ancient dwelling of Heloise and Abelard in 1118, rebuilt in 1849. Such pronouncements carved in marble are an offense to common sense". Let us promptly acknowledge that in his historical distortions, Father Loriquet showed much less boldness!

Allow us to make a digression here, intended to specify and define our thought. For a long time, a very tenacious prejudice, attributed the invention of the wheelbarrow to the scientist Pascal. And even though the falsity of this attribution has today been demonstrated, the great majority of people persist in the belief that it is founded. Question a school boy: he will answer you that this practical vehicle known to all, owes its conception to this illustrious physicist. Among the mischievous, noisy, and often distracted individualities of the little scholar world, it is above all through this supposed invention that the name of Pascal has been imposed on young minds. Many junior school students, unaware of who Descartes, Michelangelo, Denis Papin or Torricelli were, will not hesitate for a minute about Pascal. It would be interesting to know why our children, among so many admirable discoveries whose daily applications they have before their eyes, rather know Pascal and his wheelbarrow than the men of genius to whom we owe steam, the battery, beet sugar, and the stearic candle. Is it because the wheelbarrow touches them closer, interests them more, is more familiar to them? Perhaps! Be that as it may, the common mistake propagated by junior school history books could easily be unmasked: one could merely leaf through a few illuminated 13th and 14th century manuscripts where several miniatures represent medieval farmers using the wheelbarrow ⁽⁹⁾. And even without undertaking such difficult research, just a glance cast at monuments would have permitted us to reestablish the truth. Among the motifs surrounding one archivolt of the northern porch of the Beauvais Cathedral, is represented pushing his wheelbarrow, a type of wheelbarrow very similar to the ones we actually use today (**Plate I**). The same implement can also be identified in agricultural scenes that form the subject of two carved misericords, coming from the stalls of the Abbey of Saint-Lucien near Beauvais (1492-1500)⁽¹⁰⁾. Furthermore, if truth compels us to refuse to credit Pascal with a very old invention, older than his birth by several centuries, his greatness and the power of his genius are in no way diminished. The immortal author of the *Pensees*, of the calculus of probabilities, the inventor of the hydraulic press, of the calculating machine, etc., forces our admiration by works and inventions much greater and of a different scope than that of the wheelbarrow. However, that which is of consequence to elicit and that only counts for us is that, in the search for truth, it is preferable to call upon buildings rather than upon historical documents, sometimes incomplete, often tendentious, almost always unreliable.

Monsieur Andre Geiger comes to a parallel conclusion when, struck by the inexplicable homage rendered to the statue of Nero by Hadrian, he refutes the iniquitous accusations borne against this emperor and against Tiberius. Like ourselves, he denies and credibility to purposefully falsified historical accounts, on the subject of these so-called human monsters and he does not hesitate to write: "I trust monuments and logic more than I trust historical accounts".

If, as we have said, the falsification of a text, the writing of a chronicle demand nothing more than some skill and know-how, on the other hand, it is impossible to build a cathedral. Let us therefore call upon buildings; they will provide us with more serious or accurate information. There, at least, we will see our "characters portrayed alive", fixed in stone or wood with their real physiognomies, their costumes and their gestures, whether they figure in sacred scenes or



BEAUVAIS - SAINT-ETIENNE CATHEDRAL
Archivolt of the Northern Porch - Man pushing a Wheelbarrow

are the subjects of secular compositions. We shall contact them and it will not be long before we love them. Now we will question the 13th century harvester who is sharpening his scythe on the portal of Paris, now the 15th century apothecary who, in the stalls of Amiens, is pounding some unknown drug in his wooden mortar. His neighbor, the drunkard with the red nose, is no stranger to us; we remember having met this merry drinker several times, as we ambled along. Would he not be the man who cried out in the middle of the "mystery play" before the sight of Jesus' miracle at the wedding of Cana:

"If I could do what he is doing, the entire sea of Galilee today would be turned into wine; And never on earth would there be a drop of water, nothing would rain from the sky but wine".

And this beggar who escaped from the Cour des Miracles ⁽¹¹⁾ bearing no other stigma of distress than his rags and his lice, we know him too. He is the one that the Companions of the Passion introduce at the feet of Christ and who miserable utters this soliloquy:

"I look at my rags to see if some money has been thrown there; Just now I heard: Give him, give! --- There isn't a penny, not even a half... a poor man has no friend".

In spite of all that has been written, we ought to accustom ourselves, willy-nilly, to the true fact that at the beginning of the Middle Ages society was already reaching a high degree of civilization and splendor. John of Salisbury, who visited Paris in 1176, expressed the most sincere enthusiasm on this topic in his Polycraticon. "When I saw the abundance of sustenance, the cheerfulness of the people, the good conduct of the clergy, the majesty and glory of the entire Church, the diverse occupations of men dedicated to the study of philosophy; it seemed to me that I saw Jacob's ladder whose top reached heaven and which angels ascended and descended. I was compelled to admit that truly the Lord was in this place and that I did not know it. This sentence from a poet also comes to mind: 'Happy is he who is sentenced to this place in exile!'" ⁽¹²⁾.

II

MIDDLE AGES AND RENAISSANCE

No one disputes today the high value of medieval works. But who will ever logically explain the strange contempt whose victims they were until the 19th century? Who will tell us why, since the Renaissance, the elite of the artists, scientists, and thinkers made a special point of airing the most complete indifference for the bold creations of this misunderstood period, original among all, and so magnificently expressive of the genius of France? What was, what could have been, the profound cause of the reverse of opinion, and later, of the banishment, the exclusion that so long weighed on Gothic art? Must we indict ignorance, whim, perversion of taste? We do not know. A French writer, Charles de Remusat believes he has discovered the principal reason of this unfair contempt in the absence of literature, which does not fail to surprise. "The Renaissance", he affirms, "despised the Middle Ages because true French literature, that which followed it, erased the last traces of it. And yet medieval France offers a striking sight. Its genius was elevated and severe. It took pleasure in deep meditations and profound research; it exposed in a language without grace and without brilliance sublime truths and subtle hypotheses. It produced a singularly philosophical literature. This literature probably exercised the human spirit more than it served it. Several first rate men have successfully, albeit in vain, illustrated it; for modern generations their works do not exist. They had the intelligence and the ideas but not the talent to speak well in a language that is not stiff or awkward. Scotus Erigena reminds us at times of Plato; scarcely anyone has taken philosophical freedom farther than he, and he boldly rises in this region of the skies where truth shines only in bolts like lightning; he thought for himself in the 9th century. St. Anselm is an original metaphysician whose learned idealism regenerates common beliefs; he conceived and realized the audacious thought of directly touching the notion of divinity. He is a theologian of pure reason. St. Bernard is sometimes brilliant and ingenious, sometimes somber and moving. Mystical like Fenelon, he resembles an effective and popular Bossuet, who dominated his epoch by his speech and who commanded kings rather than praising or serving them. His unfortunate rival, his noble victim, Abelard, employed in the exposition of dialectic science and unknown rigor and a relative lucidity which shows a nervous and supple mind made to understand and explain everything. He was a great propagator of ideas. Heloise molded a dry and pedantic language so as to bring out the finesse of a brilliant intelligence, the sufferings of the proudest and most tender of souls, the raptures of a desperate passion. John of Salisbury is a clairvoyant critic, who watches the human mind as a sight or scene and who describes it in its progresses, in its movements, in its retrogressions, with premature truth and impartiality. It seems he foresaw this talent of our time, this art of examining the stand-still postures of the intellectual society in order to judge it. St Thomas, embracing the entire philosophy of his time as a whole, went farther at times than ours; he has bound all of human knowledge into a perpetual syllogism and completely unwound it following the thread of a continuous reasoning, thus combing in a vast and a logical mind. Gerson finally, Gerson, theologian whose sentiments competed with deduction, who understood and neglected philosophy, knew how to subdue reason without humiliating it, how to captivate hearts without offending minds, finally how to imitate the God who invokes faith while he has us believe in him by making himself loved. All these men, and I named only a few, were great and their works admirable. But what were they lacking, to be admired and to keep a constant influence on the ensuing literature? It was neither science, thought, nor genius; I am afraid that it was only one thing: style.

"French literature does not come from them. It does not call to their authority, nor does it remember their names; it only takes pride in having obliterated them".

Hence we can conclude that if the Middle Ages received spirit as its share, the Renaissance took a malicious pleasure in imprisoning us in the letter...

What Charles de Remusat says is very judicious, at least as far as the first medieval period is concerned, when the intelligentsia appeared submissive to the Byzantine influence and still imbued with Roman doctrines. A century later, the same reasoning loses a great part of its value; one cannot dispute, for example, that the works of the epic of the round Table have a certain charm which arises from a more careful form. Thibaut, Count of Champagne, in his Songs of the kings of Navarre, Guillaume de Lorris and Jehan Clopinel, authors of the Romance of the Rose, all our trouveres and troubadours of the 13th and 14th centuries without having the proud genius of the learned philosophers, their ancestors, knew how to pleasantly handle words and often express themselves with a grace and flexibility which characterizes today's literature.

Therefore, we do not see why the Renaissance held a grudge against the Middle Ages and recorded its supposed literary shortcomings, so as to prohibit it and to throw it back into the chaos of new civilizations emerging from barbarism.

As for us, we deem medieval thought to be of scientific nature and of no other, for which art and literature are only the humble servants of traditional science. They are appointed to symbolically translate the truths of the Middle Ages received from Antiquity, whose faithful depository or remained. Subjected to a purely allegorical expression, held under the forceful will of the same parable which removes Christian mystery from the layman, art and literature display an obvious unease and reveal some stiffness; yet, the solidity and simplicity of execution endow them with an incontestable originality. It is true that the observer will never find alluring the image of Christ, such as it is presented on Romanesque porches, where Jesus appears, at the center of the mystical almond, surrounded by the four evangelical animals. It is enough for us that his divinity be emphasized by his own emblems and announces itself as revealer of a secret teaching. We admire the Gothic masterpieces for their nobility and the boldness of their expression; if they do not have the delicate perfection of form, they possess to a supreme degree the initiatory power of a learned and transcendent philosophy. They are severe and austere productions, not the light, graceful, and pleasing motifs, such as those art fondly wasted on us since the Renaissance. But while the latter aspire only to flatter the eye or to charm the senses, the artistic and literary works of the Middle Ages are founded on higher thought, true and concrete, the cornerstone of an immutable science, the indestructible basis of Religion. If we had to define these two tendencies, one profound, the other superficial, we would say that Gothic art is entirely contained in the learned majesty of its buildings and the Renaissance in the pleasant ornament of its dwellings.

The medieval colossus did not collapse all at once in the decline of the 15th century. Here and there, its genius succeeded in resisting for a long time the imposition of the new directives. We see its agony prolonged well into the middle of the next century, and we find in some of the buildings of that period the same philosophical impulse, the same foundations of wisdom which generated for three centuries so many imperishable works. And so, without taking account of their later erections, we will consider these works of later importance but of similar meaning with the hope of discovering in them the secret idea symbolically expressed by their builders.

Notwithstanding their purpose and their use, we rank these refuges of the esotericism of antiquity, these sanctuaries of traditional science, quite rare today, in the hermetic iconology among the artistic guardians of the great philosophical truths.

Would you like an example? Here is an admirable tympanum ⁽²⁾ which decorated in the faraway 12th century the front door of an old house from the region of Reims (**Plate II**). The quite clear topic could easily do without a description. Under a great arcade inscribing two other twin arcades within it, the master teaches his disciple and points this finger to the pages of an open book on the passage which he is commenting on. Underneath, a young and vigorous athlete strangles a monstrous animal, perhaps a dragon, of which we can only see the head and neck. He stands next to two young people closely embracing. Science thus appears as the ruler of Strength and Love, opposing the superiority of mind to the physical manifestations of power and feeling.

How could one conceive that a construction signed with such a thought did not belong to some unknown philosopher? Why would we refuse to this bas-relief the credit of a symbolic conception emanating from a cultivated brain, from a learned man affirming his love of study and teaching by this example? We would be most assuredly wrong to exclude the dwelling with such a characteristic frontispiece from the number of emblematic works which we propose to study under the general title of *Dwellings of the Philosophers*.

(1) Charles de Remusat: *Critiques et Etudes Littéraires (Literary Critics and Studies)*.

(2) This tympanum is kept at the Musée Lapidaire of Reims Sculpture Museum), located in the public hospital building (former abbey of Saint-Remi, on Simon Street). It was discovered around 1857 during the construction of the prison in the foundations of the house called the Christendom of Reims, located on the site of the Parvis, and with the inscription: *Fidas, Spes, Caritas*, (Faith, Hope and Charity). This house belonged to the chapter.



REIMS - SCULPTURE MUSEUM
Tympanum of a 12th Century House

III.

MEDIEVAL ALCHEMY

Of all the sciences cultivated in the Middle Ages certainly none was more in fashion and received more honor than the science of alchemy. Such is the name under which the sacred or priestly Art was hidden among the Arabs, who had inherited it from the Egyptians and which the medieval West was to receive later on with so much enthusiasm.

Many controversies have been raised about the diverse etymologies attributed to the word alchemy. Pierre-Jean Fabre in his *Summary of Chemical Secrets* claims it recalls the name of Cham, son of Noah, supposed to have been the first alchemical artisan, and he writes it alchamie. The anonymous author of a curious manuscript ⁽¹⁾ thinks that "the word alchemy is derived from als which means salt in Greek and from chymie which means fusion, and it is thus well named, since salt which is so admirable has been usurped". But if salt is named [*39-1] (*als*) in the Greek language, [*39-2] (*cheimeia*) standing for [*39-3] (*chymeia*), alchemy, has no other meaning than that of sap or secretion. Others find its origin in the first renomination of the land of Egypt, native land of the sacred Art, Kymie or Chemi. Napoleon Landais finds no difference between the two words chimie and alchimie (chemistry and alchemy); he simply adds that the prefix al should not be mixed up with the Arabic article al and simply means marvelous virtue. Those who hold the opposite hypothesis, using the article al and the noun chimie, understand it to mean chemistry par excellence or the hyperchemistry of modern occultists. If we had to bring in our personal opinion in this debate, we would say that phonetic cabala recognizes a close relationship between the Greek words [*40-1] (*Cheimeia*), [*40-2] (*Chymeia*), and [*40-3] (*Cheuma*), which indicates that which runs down, streams, flows, and particularly indicates molten metal, the fusion itself, as well as any work made from molten metal. This would be a brief and succinct definition of alchemy as a metallurgical technique ⁽²⁾. But we know, on the other hand, that the name and the thing are based on the permutation of form by light, fire or spirit; such is in any case the true meaning indicated by the Language of the Birds.

Born in the Orient, land of the mysterious and the marvelous, the alchemical science spread in the West through three great roads of penetration: Byzantine, Mediterranean, and Hispanic. It was above all the result of Arabic conquests. This curious, studious people, avidly interested in philosophy and culture, a civilizing people par excellence, forms the connecting link, the chain which connects oriental antiquity to the occidental Middle Ages. It plays in the history of human progress a role comparable to that exercised by the Phoenician merchants between Egypt and Assyria. The Arabs, educators of the Greeks and Persians, transmitted to Europe the science of Egypt and Babylon, augmented by their own acquisitions, throughout the European continent (the Byzantine Road) around the 8th century of our era. Furthermore, the Arab influence exercised its action in our countries upon the return of the expeditions to Palestine (Mediterranean Road) and it is the Crusaders of the 12th century who imported most of the ancient knowledge. Finally, closer to us, at the dawn of the 13th century, new elements of civilization, science, and art, coming around the 8th century from Northern Africa spread into Spain (the Hispanic Road) and increased the first contributions of the Greek-Byzantine center of learning.

At first timid, hesitant, alchemy progressively woke up, and it was not long before it became stronger. It tended to take the lead, and thus the exotic science transplanted to our soil acclimatized itself wonderfully to it with such vigor that it soon bloomed into an exuberant flowering. Its development, its progress was prodigious. It was barely cultivated ---

exclusively in the shadows of monastic cells --- in the 12th century; by the 14th, it had propagated everywhere, radiating upon all social classes, shining everywhere with the brightest glow. Every country gave to the mysterious science a nursery of fervent disciples, and each social condition devoted itself to it. Nobility and the upper middle class practiced it. Scholars, monks, princes, prelates professed it; even master craftsmen, minor artisans, goldsmiths, gentle glassmakers, enamellers, apothecaries, experienced the irresistible desire to handle the retort. And if no one worked it openly --- royal authority hunted down the puffers and the Popes fulminated against them ⁽³⁾ --- no one failed to study it undercover. The company of philosophers, true ones or pretenders, was avidly sought after. These philosophers undertook long trips with the intention of augmenting their knowledge, or they wrote one another from country to country, kingdom to kingdom, using a cipher. People fought over the manuscripts of the great Adepts, those of the cosmopolitan Zosimus, Ostanes, Synesius, over copies of Geber, Rhazes, Artpehius. The books of Morien, Mary the prophet, the fragments of Hermes were traded at an exorbitant price. Intellectuals were seized by the fever, and thanks to the help of fraternities, lodges, initiation centers, the puffers grew and multiplied. Few families escaped the pernicious attraction of the golden chimera; very rare were those who did not count in their midst some practicing alchemist, some hunter of the impossible. Imagination was given free reign. The auri sacra fames (accursed hunger for gold) ruined the nobleman, caused despair in the common man, starved anyone who let himself be caught, and profited only the charlatans. Lenglet Dufresnoy ⁽⁴⁾ writes: "Abbots, bishops, doctors, recluses, all made it their occupation; it was the folly of the time, and everyone knows that every century has one which is its own; but unfortunately, this one lasted longer than the others and is not even completely over".

With what passion, what spirit, what hopes the cursed science envelops the Gothic cities sleeping under the stars! Subterranean and secret fermentation which, as soon as night has come, fills the deep cellars with strange pulsations, emitted from ventilation grills in intermittent bursts, and climbs in sulphurous volutes to the top of the gables!

After the famous name of Artephius (around 1130), the renown of the masters who succeeded him consecrates the hermetic reality and stimulated the ardor of the candidates to Adepthood. In the 13th century, there is the illustrious English monk, Roger Bacon, whom his disciples nickname Doctor admirabilis (1214-1292) and whose enormous reputation becomes universal; next comes France, with Alain de l'Isle, doctor of Paris and monk of Citeaux (who died around 1298); Christopher the Parisian (around 1260); and Master Arnold of Villanova (1245-1310), while in Italy Thomas Aquinas --- *Doctor angelicus* --- (1225) and the monk Ferrari (1280) shine.

The 14th century sees a whole new pleiad of artists emerge. Raymond Lully --- Doctor illuminatus --- a Spanish Franciscan monk (1235-1315); John Dastin, an English philosopher; John Cremer, Abbot of Westminster; Richard nicknamed Robert the Englishman, author of *Correctum alchymiae* (around 1330); the Italian Petrus Bonus of Lombardy; the French Pope John XXII (1244-1317); William of Paris, inventor of the hermetic bas-reliefs on the porch of Notre-Dame; Jehan de Mehun, called Clopinel, one of the authors of the *Romance of the Rose* (1280-1364); Grasseus, nicknamed Hortulanus, commentator on the Emerald Table (1358); finally, the most famous and the most popular philosopher of our country, the alchemist Nicholas Flamel (1330-1417).

The 15th century marks the glorious period of the science and surpasses even the preceding ones as much by the value as by the number of the masters who rendered it illustrious. Among them, Basil Valentine should be quoted first, a Benedictine monk from the abbey of St Peter's

at Erfurt, in the electorate of Mainz (about 1413), perhaps the most significant artist the hermetic art has ever produced; one ought to also cite his compatriot, the abbot Trithemius; Isaac Hollandus (1408); the two Englishmen, Thomas Norton and George Ripley; Lambsprinck; George Aurach of Strasbourg (1415); the Calabrian monk Lacinius (1459); and the noble Bernard Trevisan (106-1490) who spent 56 years of his life pursuing the Great Work, and whose name will remain in the history of alchemy as a symbol of constancy, unshakable perseverance and obstinacy.

From that moment on, hermetism falls into discredit. Its very supporters, embittered by failure, turn against it. Attacked from all sides, its prestige disappears; enthusiasm decreases, opinion is modified. Practical operations, which had been collected, gathered after being unveiled and taught, allow dissidents to support the thesis of the alchemical void, to ruin philosophy while building the basis of our chemistry. Seton, Wenceslas Lavinius of Moravia, Zacharius, and Paracelsus are, in the 16th century, the only known heirs to the Egyptian esotericism, which the Renaissance rejected after corrupting it. Let us, in passing, pay a supreme tribute to the passionate defender of antique truths --- Paracelsus; the great tribune deserves from us eternal gratitude for his ultimate and courageous intervention. Although it was in vain, his intervention is nonetheless one of his highest titles to fame.

The hermetic art prolongs its agony until the 17th century and finally passes away, after having given to the occidental world three offsprings of great influence: Lascaris, President d'Espagnet, and the mysterious Eirenaeus Philalethes, a living enigma whose true identity has never been uncovered.

(1) *L'Interruption du Somneil cabalistique ou le Devoilement des Tableaux de l'Antiquite (The Interruption of Cabalistic Sleep, or Unveiling of Paintings from Antiquity)*, 18th century manuscripts with drawing --- Bibliotheque de Arsenal # 2520 (175 S.A.F.), Bibl. Nat., old French funds, # 670 (7123), 17th Cty., Bibl. St Genevieve, #2267, treatise II, 18th cty.

(2) And still this definition would be more appropriate for archimy or voarchadumy, a branch of the science which teaches the transmutation of metals into one or another rather than alchemy proper.

(3) Cf. Papal bull *Spondet pariter*, issued against alchemists by Pope John XXII in 1317, who nonetheless had written a very singular *Ars Transmutatoria Metallorum*.

(4) Lenglet-Dufresnoy, *Histoire de la Philosophie Hermetique (History of Hermetic Philosophy)*, Paris Coustelier, 1742

IV

THE LEGENDARY LABORATORY

With its following of mystery and the unknown, behind its veil of illuminism and marvel, alchemy evokes a past full of distant stories, wonderful tales, and surprising testimonies. Its singular theories, its strange recipes, the time-honored reputation of its great masters, the passionate arguments it aroused, the favor it enjoyed in the Middle Ages, its obscure, enigmatic and paradoxical literature, seem to give off today the smell of mustiness, of rarified air acquired over long years by empty tombs, dead flowers, abandoned dwellings, yellowed parchments.

The Alchemist? --- A meditative elderly man, with a grave forehead, crowned with white hair, a pale and wasted silhouette, an original character from a long gone humanity and a forgotten world, an obstinate recluse, stooped by years of study, late nights, persevering research and unscrambling of the enigmas of the high science. Such is the philosopher that the poet's imagination or the painter's brush like to depict for us.

His laboratory --- cave, cell, or ancient crypt --- is dimly lit by gloomy daylight diffused through the myriad dusty spider webs. Yet, it is there, amidst the silence, that the prodigy is slowly accomplished. Untiring nature works --- better than in the rocky abysses --- under the prudent attention of man, with the help of the stars and the grace of God. Occult labor, Cyclopean and thankless task, as vast as a nightmare! At the center of this *in pace* --- in peace, a being, a scholar for whom nothing else exists any more, watches, attentive and patient, over the successive stages of the Great Work...

As our eyes become accustomed to the darkness, thousands of things emerge from the shadow, are revealed, and take on a precise shape. Good Lord, where are we? Could it be Polyphemus' den or Vulcan's cave?

Near us, an extinguished forge, covered with dust and metal scales; the anvil, hammer, tongs, shears, clamp irons; rusted ingot molds; the rough and powerful tools of the metallurgist ended up there. In a corner, thick books heavily bound with iron --- such as antiphonals --- with signets sealed with antiquated leads; ashy manuscripts, mysterious books piled up; yellowed volumes filled with notes and formulas, stained from the incipit to the text. Flasks, bulging like good monks, filled with opalescent emulsions, pale green, blue-green, or flesh-colored liquids, exhale these stale acid odors whose sharpness contradicts the throat and stings the nose.

On the hood of the furnace strange oblong vessels are aligned, with short pipes, caulked and covered with wax; mattresses, with spheres, rainbowed by metallic deposits, extend their necks, sometimes cylindrical and slender, sometimes widened or inflated; greenish horned vessels, retorts, and pottery dishes sit next to crucibles made of red and flame-like earth. In the far corner, placed on their straw baskets all along a stone cornice, philosophical eggs, in transparent and elegant contrast to the massive and rounded cucurbit --- *praegnans cucurbita*.

Damnation! Here are now some anatomical specimens, skeletal fragments: blackened, toothless skulls, repugnant with their beyond-the-grave grin; suspended human fetuses, desiccated and shriveled, miserable remnants showing their minute bodies, their parchment

heads, sneering and pitiful. These round, vitreous and golden eyes are those of an owl with dull feathers, which stands next to the alligator, giant salamander, another important symbol of the practice. The fearsome reptile emerges from an obscure recess, stretches the chain of his vertebrae on his stout legs and directs the bony abyss of his frightful jaws towards the arched ceiling.

Placed randomly, in case of need, on the bed-plate of the furnace, notice these vitrified pots, aludels, and sublimatories; these pelicans with thick walls; these infernal vessels similar to large eggs whose chalazas are visible, these olive-colored bottles buried in the middle of the sand against the athanor, with its light fumes climbing over the ribbed vault. Here is the copper alembic --- *homo galeatus* ⁽¹⁾ --- stained with green smudges; there the descensories, the cucurbits and their antenos, the two brothers or twins of the cohobation; coiled receivers; heavy cast-iron and marble mortars; a large bellows with its wrinkled leather sides, near a pile of muffles, tiles, cupels, and evaporators...

A chaotic conglomeration of archaic instruments, bizarre materials and out-of-date utensils; a confusion of all sciences, a tangle of impressive faunas! And, looking down upon this disorder, affixed to the keystone of the vault, a pendant with spread wings, the great raven, hieroglyph of material death and its decompositions, the mysterious emblem of the mysterious operations.

Curious a well is the wall, or at least what is left of it. Some inscriptions of mystical meaning fill the voids: *Hic lapis est subtus te, supra te, erga te et circa te* ⁽²⁾, mnemonic verses entangle themselves, whimsically engraved with a stiletto on soft stone; one of them dominates, carved in Gothic cursive writing: *Azoth et ignis tibi sufficient* ⁽³⁾, Hebrew characters; circles intersected with triangles, interspersed with quadrilateral figures in the manner of Gnostic signatures. Here, a thought based on the dogma of unity summarizes all of philosophy: *Omnia ab uno et in unum omnia* ⁽⁴⁾. Elsewhere, the image of the scythe, emblem of the 13th Arcanum and the house of Saturn; the Star of Solomon; the symbol of Cancer, supplication of the evil spirit; a few passages from Zoroaster, witness to the great antiquity of the accursed sciences. Finally, bathing in the light field of the basement window and more legible in this labyrinth of imprecisions, the hermetic ternary: Salt, Sulphur, Mercury...

Such is the legendary painting of the alchemist and his laboratory. Fantastic vision, lacking truth, sprung from popular imagination and reproduced in the old almanacs, treasures of the peddler's trade.

Puffers, magicians, sorcerers, astrologers, necromancers?

Anathema and malediction!

(1) Translator's Note: Helmeted man.

(2) Translator's Note: This stone is directly beneath you, above you, in you, all around you.

(3) Translator's Note: Nitrogen and fire will suffice.

(4) Translator's Note: All from one and in one all.

CHEMISTRY AND PHILOSOPHY

Chemistry, incontestably, is the science of facts, just as alchemy is that of causes. The first, confined to the material domain, is supported by experiment. The second preferably takes its directives from philosophy. While the object of the first is the study of natural bodies, the other tries to penetrate the mysterious dynamics which preside over their transformations. Therein lies their essential difference, enabling us to say that alchemy, compared with our positive science, the only one permitted and taught today, is a spiritualistic chemistry, for it allows us to catch a glimpse of God through the darkness of substance.

Furthermore, in our opinion, it seems insufficient to know how to recognize and classify facts exactly; one must still question nature, and learn from her in what conditions and under the control of what will her manifold productions can take place. Indeed, the philosophical mind will not be content with the mere possibility of identifying bodies. It demands the knowledge of the secret of their elaborations. To open ajar the door of the laboratory where nature mixes the elements, is good; to discover the occult force under whose influence her work is accomplished, is better. We are obviously far from knowing all natural bodies and their combinations, since we discover new ones daily; but we know enough to temporarily leave aside the study of inert matter and direct our researches towards the unknown animator, agent of so many marvels.

To say, for example, that two volumes of hydrogen combined with one volume of oxygen yield water, states a chemical banality. And yet, who will teach us why the result of this combination presents, in a special state, characteristics which the gases that produced it do not possess? What then is the agent which imposes its new specificity upon the compound and forces the water, solidified by cold, always to crystallize in the same system? Furthermore, if the fact is undeniable and rigorously controlled, why is it that it is impossible for us to reproduce it simply by reading the formula charged with explaining its mechanism? For, in the notation H_2O , the essential agent, capable of provoking the intimate union of the gaseous elements is missing --- i.e., fire. Yet, we challenge the most skilled chemist to manufacture synthetic water by mixing oxygen and hydrogen in the indicated volumes: the two gases will always refuse to combine with one another. To succeed in the experiment, it is essential to introduce fire, either in the form of a spark, or in the form of an ignited body or still a body liable to be brought to the point of incandescence (platinum sponge). So one recognizes, without being able to oppose the least serious argument to our thesis, that the chemical formula of water is, if not false, at least incomplete and truncated. And the elemental agent fire, without which no combination can be effected, being excluded from the chemical notation, the entire science proves to be filled with gaps and incapable of providing through its formulas a logical and true explanation of the studied phenomena. "Physical chemistry", writes A. Etard ⁽¹⁾, "lures the majority of research minds. It is the one which touches most closely on profound truths and which will slowly give us laws capable of changing all of our systems and our formulas. However, by its very importance, this kind of chemistry is the most abstract and the most mysterious that exists. During the short moments of a creative thought, the best minds cannot succeed in applying and comparing all the great well-known facts. Faced with this impossibility, they resort to mathematical representations. These representations are most often perfect in their methods and results; but in their application to what is deeply unknown, we cannot make mathematics reveal truths whose elements we have

not given them, The most gifted man presents the problem badly which he does not understand. If these problems could be correctly formulated in an equation, we could have the hope of resolving them. But, in our present state of ignorance, we are fatally compelled to introduce numerous constants, to neglect certain terms, and to apply hypotheses. Putting the problem into an equation is perhaps no longer altogether correct. Even so, we console ourselves because it leads to a solution; but, it is a temporary arrest of the progress of science when such solutions are imposed for years on good minds as a scientific demonstration. A lot of work is done in this direction which takes time and which leads to contradictory theories, destined to be forgotten".

These famous theories, which were long evoked and opposed to hermetic conceptions, see their solidity strongly compromised today. Sincere scientists, belonging to the creative schools of the same hypotheses --- considered to be certainties --- only grant them a very relative value; their field of action diminishes concurrently with the decrease of their power of investigation. Monsieur Emile Picard in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* expresses this state of affairs with a frankness revealing of the true scientific spirit. "As for theories", he writes, "they do not even propose to provide a casual explanation for the reality itself, but only to translate it into images or mathematical symbols. We ask of theories, which are tools of the trade, to coordinate, at least for a while, known phenomena and to predict new ones. When their fecundity is exhausted, we try to make them undergo transformations which the discovery of new facts have rendered necessary". And so, contrary to philosophy which precedes facts, ensures the direction of ideas, and their practical connection; theories, conceived after the fact and modified according to the results of experiments as new acquisitions are made, always reflect the uncertainty of provisional things, and give modern science a character to perpetual empiricism. Numerous chemical facts, seriously observed, resist logic and defy all reason. "For example", J. Duclaux ⁽²⁾ says, "bivalent copper iodide spontaneously decomposes into iodine and monovalent copper iodide. Since iodine is an oxidizer and copper salts are reducing agents, this decomposition cannot be explained. The formation of extremely unstable compounds, such as nitrogen trichloride, is equally inexplicable. We can no more understand why gold, which is resistant to acids and alkalis, even when concentrated and hot, dissolves in a cold dilute solution of potassium cyanide; why hydrogen sulfide is more volatile than water; why sulphur chloride, composed of two elements each of which combine with potassium forming incandescence, is itself without action on this metal".

We have just spoken of fire; and yet, we only envisage it in its common form and not in its spiritual essence, which introduces itself in bodies at the very moment of their appearance on the physical plane. What we want to demonstrate without leaving the alchemical domain, is the grave error which dominates all of modern science and which prevents it from recognizing this universal principle which animates substance, to whatever kingdom it belongs. Yet it manifests itself all around us, under our very eyes, either by the new properties which matter inherits from it or by the phenomena which accompany its liberation. Light --- rarified and spiritualized fire --- possesses the same chemical virtues and power as elementary crude fire. An experiment, with the object of synthetically creating hydrochloric acid (HCl) from its components, amply demonstrates it. If we put equal volumes of chlorine and hydrogen gas in a glass flask, the two gases will keep their own individuality as long as the flask that contains them is kept in darkness. With some diffused light, they progressively combine. But if we expose the vessel to direct solar rays, it explodes and shatters violently.

The objection will be raised that fire, considered a mere catalyst, is not an integral part of the substance and therefore cannot be indicated in the expression of chemical formulas. The

argument is more fallacious than true, since the experiment itself belies it. Here is a piece of sugar in whose equation there is no equivalent for fire; if we break it in darkness, we will see a blue spark shoot out from it. Where does it come from? Where would it be contained if not in the crystalline structure of the saccharose? We mentioned water; let us throw on its surface a fragment of potassium: it spontaneously bursts into flame and burns energetically. Where is this visible flame hiding? It matters little whether it be in water, air, or metal; the essential point is that it potentially exists inside one or the other of these bodies, perhaps in the three. What is phosphorus, the light-bearer and generator of fire? How do noctilucas, glowworms and fireflies transform part of their vital energy into light? What compels the salts of uranium, cerium, and zirconium to become fluorescent when they have been submitted to the action of sunlight? By what mysterious synchronism does barium platinum cyanide shine when in contact with Roentgen rays?

Let no one come and talk to us about oxidation being in the normal order of igneous phenomena. It would be deferring the question rather than resolving it. Oxidation is a result, not a cause. It is a combination, subject to an active principle, to an agent. If some energetic oxidations disengage heat or fire, it is most certainly because this fire was already engaged in it. The electrical fluid, silent, obscure, and cold runs through its metallic conductor without otherwise influencing it nor revealing its passage. But if it meets with resistance, the energy immediately reveals itself with the qualities and in the form of fire. A lamp filament becomes incandescent, the charcoal of a retort ignites, the most refractory metallic wire melts at once. So, isn't electricity indeed fire or a potential fire? Where does it draw its origin if not from decomposition (batteries), or from the disintegration of metals (dynamos), bodies highly charged with the igneous principle? Let us detach a particle of steel or of iron by grinding it on a stone or by striking it against a flint and we will see a spark shining, thus freed. We know the pneumatic lighter well enough, based on the property possessed by atmospheric air being ignited by simple compression. Liquids themselves are often genuine reservoirs of fire. It suffices to pour a few drops of concentrated nitric acid on oil of turpentine to provoke its inflammation. In the category of salts let us mention in passing fulminate, nitrocellulose, potassium picrate, etc.

Without further multiplying examples, we see that it would be childish to maintain that fire, because we do not directly perceive it in matter, does not really exist there in a latent state. Ancient alchemists, who had, according to traditional sources, more knowledge than we are willing to grant them, assured us that the sun is a cold star and that its rays are dark (3). Nothing would seem more paradoxical nor more contrary to appearances, and yet nothing is truer. A few moments of reflection allow us to become convinced. If the sun were a globe of fire, as we are taught, it would be enough to approach it, even a little, to experience the effect of a growing heat. Precisely the opposite occurs. High mountains remain crowded with snow despite the heat of summer. In the elevated regions of the atmosphere when the sun reaches its zenith, the cupolas of hot-air balloons are covered with frost and the passengers suffer from intense cold. So, experience demonstrates that temperature goes down as altitude increases. Even light is only visible to us in as much as we are placed in its field of radiation. If we are outside the radiant beam, its action ceases for our eyes. It is a well-known fact that an observer looking at the sky from the bottom of a well at noon sees the starry night sky.

Whence, then, do heat and light come? From the simple shock of cold and dark vibrations against the gaseous molecules of our atmosphere. And since resistance increases in direct proportion to the density of the environment, heat and light are stronger on the surface of the earth than at great altitudes because the strata of air are also denser. Such is, at least, the physical explanation of the phenomenon. In fact, and according to hermetic theory, the

opposition of the vibratory movement, the reactions are nothing more than the first causes of an effect which translates into the liberation of luminous and fiery atoms from atmospheric air. Under the action of the vibratory bombardment, the spirit, freed from the body, takes on, for our senses, physical qualities characteristic of its active phase: luminosity, brilliance, heat.

Thus, the only approach that we can address to chemical science is that it does not take into account the igneous agent, spiritual principle and basis of energetics, under whose influence all material transformations occur. It is the systematic exclusion of this spirit, higher will, and hidden dynamism of things, which deprives modern chemistry of the philosophical character alchemy possesses. "You believe", writes Monsieur Henri Helier to Monsieur L. Olivier ⁽⁴⁾, "in the indefinite fruitfulness of experience. Indeed, but experimentation has always been led by a preconceived idea, by a philosophy. An idea often almost absurd in appearance, a philosophy sometimes bizarre and disconcerting in its signs. 'If I told you how I make my discoveries', Faraday used to say, 'you would take me for an imbecile'. All the great chemists thus had ideas in the back of their heads which they never revealed... It is from their work that we have extracted our methods and our present theories; they are the most precious result, but they were not the origin".

"The alembic, with its serious and sedate airs", says an anonymous ⁽⁵⁾ philosopher, "has gathered an enormous clientele in chemistry. Just try to trust it; it is an unfaithful depository, a usurer. You entrust it with a perfectly healthy object, endowed with incontestable natural properties, having a form which constitutes its existence. It returns to you shapeless, in powder form or in gaseous form. It pretends to give you everything back when it has kept everything, minus the weight, which is nothing since it comes from a cause independent of the body itself. And the union of scientists sanctions this horrible usury! You give it wine, it gives you back tannin, alcohol and water in equal weights. What is missing there? The taste, that is the only thing which makes wine what it is, and so on with everything else. Because you have extracted three things from wine, gentlemen chemists, you say: wine is made of three things. Turn them back into wine or else I will say to you: these are three things which are made from the wine. You can undo what you have done, but you will never remake that which you have undone in nature. Bodies only resist you in proportion to how strongly they are compounded, and you call simple bodies all those that resist you: vanity!

"I like the microscope; it simply shows us things as they are, merely extending our perception, therefore it is the scientists who attribute opinions to it. But when, deeply immersed in the smallest details, these gentlemen come to bring to the microscope the smallest grain or the smallest droplet, the sarcastic instrument seems to say to them by showing them live animals there: Analyze those for me. So, what is the analysis? Vanity, vanity!

"Finally, when a learned doctor cuts into a cadaver with his scalpel to find the causes of the illness that killed the victim, using a microscope he can only find the results. For the cause of death is in that of life, and true medicine, that which Christ naturally practiced, and which is being scientifically reborn with homeopathy, the medicine of similarities, can only be studied on life. And, as far as life is concerned, since there is nothing which resembles a living being less than a dead one, anatomy is the most pitiful of vanities.

"So are all instruments a cause of error? Far from it; but they indicate truth within limits that are so restricted that their truth is nothing but a vanity. Therefore, it is impossible to attach absolute truth to it. This is what I call the impossible of the real and which I make note of in order to affirm the possible of the marvelous".

Positive in its facts, chemistry remains negative in its spirit. And this precisely differentiates it from the hermetic science, whose proper domain consists above all in the study of efficient causes, of their influences, and of the modalities which they take on according to the settings and conditions. This study, exclusively philosophical, allows man to penetrate the mystery of facts, to grasp its vastness, and to finally identify it with the Supreme Intelligence, soul of the Universe, Light, God. And so, alchemy, making its way from the concrete to the abstract, from material positivism to pure spiritualism, broadens the field of human consciousness, of possibilities of action, and realizes the union of God with Nature, of Creation with the Creator, of Science with Religion.

Let no one see in this argument any unfair or tendentious criticism directed against chemists. We respect all workers of whatever profession they may belong, and we personally profess the deepest admiration for the great scientists whose discoveries have so magnificently enriched modern science. But the thing which, along with us, men of good faith will regret is not so much differences of opinion freely expressed as the unfortunate intentions of a narrow sectarianism, injecting discord between the partisans of one doctrine and another. Life is too short, too precious to waste in vain polemics, and it does not honor oneself to despise the knowledge of others. Furthermore, it matters little that so many seekers go astray, if they are sincere and if their error itself leads them to useful acquisitions; *errare humanum est*, to err is human, says the old proverb and illusion often adorns itself with the diadem of truth. Those who persevere in spite of failure have a right to our regard. Unfortunately, scientific spirit is a rare quality in men of science, and we can trace this lack back to the origin of the strife we mentioned. From the fact that a truth is neither demonstrated nor demonstrable using the means at the disposal of science, we cannot infer that it will never be so. "The word impossible is not French", said Arago; we add that it is contrary to the true scientific spirit. To call a thing impossible because its present possibility remains doubtful, is to lack confidence in the future and to deny progress. Doesn't Lemery⁽⁶⁾ commit a serious indiscretion when he dares to write about the alkahest or universal solvent: "As for me, I believe it to be imaginary, because I do not know of any". It will be agreed that our chemist overestimated the value and extent of his knowledge. Harrys, a mind refractory to hermetic thought, thus defined alchemy without ever having desired to study it: *Ars sine arte, cujus principium est menuri, medium laborare et finis mendicare*⁽⁷⁾.

Next to these scientists locked up in their ivory tower, next to these men of incontestable merit it is true, yet others, the slaves of tenacious prejudices, did not hesitate to grant civil rights to the old science. Spinoza and Leibnitz believed in the Philosophers' Stone, the chrysopea; Pascal became certain of it⁽⁸⁾. Nearer to us, a few celebrated minds, among others Sir Humphrey Davy, thought that hermetic research could lead to unexpected results. Jean-Baptiste Dumas, in his *Lessons on Chemical Philosophy*, expresses himself in these terms: "Would it be possible to admit the existence of simple isomeric bodies? This question comes very close to the transmutation of metals. Resolved affirmatively, it would give chances of success to the search for the Philosophers' Stone... We must therefore consult experimentation, and experimentation, it must be said, is until now not in opposition the possibility of the transmutation of simple bodies... It is even opposed to rejecting this idea as an absurdity which could be demonstrated by the present state of our knowledge". Francois-Vincent Raspail was a convinced alchemist and the works of the classical alchemist and the works of the classical philosophers occupied a prominent place among his other books. Ernest Bosc⁽⁹⁾ tells us that Auguste Cahours, member of the Academy of Sciences, had told him that his venerated master, Chevreul, professed the greatest esteem for our old alchemists, and his rich library contained almost all the important works of the hermetic philosophers⁽¹⁰⁾. It even appears that the dean of the students of France, as Chevreul called himself, had learned a great

deal from these old books, and he owed them part of his beautiful discoveries. The illustrious Chevreul knew how to read between the lines much of the information that had not been noticed before him. One of the most famous of the masters of the chemical science, Marcellin Berthelot, was not content to adopt the opinion of the college. Contrary to a number of his colleagues who spoke boldly of alchemy without knowing it, he devoted more than 20 years to a patient study of original Greek and Arabic texts. And from this long contact with the ancient masters, the conviction was born in him that "hermetic principles as a whole are as tenable as the best modern theories". If we are not held by the promise that we had made to them, we could add to these scientists the names of certain scientific leaders, entirely given to the Art of Hermes, but whose very situation forces them to practice it only in secret.

Today, although the unity of substance --- basis of the doctrine taught since antiquity by all alchemists --- is received and officially sanctioned, it does not seem that the idea of transmutation has followed the same progression. This fact is all the more surprising because we could not agree with the one without conceiving the possibility of the other. Furthermore, given the great antiquity of the hermetic thesis, we would have some reason to think that in the course of centuries it could possibly have been confirmed by experimentation. It is true that scientists usually do not pay much attention to this kind of argument; testimonies most worthy of faith and best supported seem suspect to them, either they ignore them or they prefer not to be interested in them. So as not to be accused of showing ill will by distorting their thought, and so as to allow the reader to exercise his judgment in all freedom, we submit to his appreciation the opinions of modern scientists and philosophers on the subject that concerns us. Jean Finot ⁽¹¹⁾, having called upon competent men, asked them the following question: In the present state of science is metallic transmutation possible or realizable? Can it even be considered as realized in the condition of our knowledge? Here are the answers that he received:

Dr Max Nordeau --- "Allow me to abstain from all discussions about the transmutation of matter. I adopt the dogma (it is one) of the unity of matter, the hypothesis of the evolution of chemical elements from the lightest to the heaviest atomic weight, and even the theory --- imprudently called law of periodicity --- of Mendeleev. I do not deny the theoretical possibility of artificially recreating, through laboratory means, a part of this evolution naturally produced in billions or trillions of years by cosmic forces and to transform lighter metals into gold. But I do not believe our century will witness the realization of the dream of the alchemists".

Henri Poincare --- "Science cannot, and must not say never! It is possible that one day we will discover the principle of fabricating gold. But for now, the problem does not seem to be resolved".

Madame Marie Curie --- "Though it is true that spontaneous atomic transformations have been observed in radioactive bodies, (the production of helium by these bodies you mention and which is perfectly correct), we can, on the other hand, affirm that no transformation of a simple body has yet been obtained by the effort of man or due to the devices imagined by him. It is therefore at present totally useless to consider the possible consequences of the fabrication of gold".

Gustave Le Bon --- "It is possible to transform steel into gold, as we transform, it is said, uranium into radium and helium --- but these transformations will most likely be on the scale of billionths of a milligram, and it would be then much more economical to extract gold from the sea which contains tons of it".

Ten years later, a popular scientific journal ⁽¹²⁾, devoted to the same inquiry, published the following opinions:

Charles Richet, professor at the Faculty of Medicine, member of the Institute, holder of the Nobel Prize --- "I admit that I have no opinion on this question".

Urabin and Jules Perrin --- "Unless there were a revolution in the art of exploiting natural forces, synthetic gold --- if it is not just a fantasy --- will not be worth being industrially exploited".

Charles Moureu --- "The fabrication of gold is not an absurd hypothesis! It is about the only affirmation that a true scientist can make... A scientist declares nothing a priori... Transmutation is a fact that we notice every day".

To this thought so courageously expressed, thought of a bold mind, gifted with the most noble scientific spirit and with a profound sense of truth, we will oppose another one very different in quality. It is the estimation of Henry Le Chatelier, member of the Institute, professor of chemistry at the Faculty of Sciences, "I absolutely refuse any interview on the topic of synthetic gold. I consider that it must come from some attempt of fraud, like the famous diamonds of Lemoine".

In truth, it would be difficult to use fewer words and less amenities to show how much contempt for the old Adepts, venerated masters of present alchemists. For our author, who has probably never opened a hermetic book, transmutation is synonymous with charlatanism. As the disciple of these great vanished men, it seems rather natural that we should inherit their unfortunate reputation. Who cares; there is our glory, the only one, by the way, which academic ignorance, proud of its gadgets: crosses, seals, palms, and parchments, condescends to grant us when it finds the opportunity. But let us allow the donkey to gravely carry its relics and let us resume our topic.

The responses that we have just read, except for that of Charles Moureu, are similar in content. They spring from the same source. Academic spirit has dictated them. Our scientists accept the theoretical possibility of transmutation; they refuse to believe in its material reality. They deny after having affirmed it. It is a convenient way to wait and see, to not compromise oneself nor to leave the domain of the relative.

Can we take atomic transformations into account when they concern a few molecules of a substance? How can we acknowledge them an absolute value when we can only control them indirectly through indirect means? Is that a mere concession the moderns are making to the ancients? We have never heard the hermetic science had asked for alms. We know it to be wealthy enough in observations and positive facts not to be reduced to begging. Besides, the theoretical idea that our chemists are defending today belongs without dispute to the alchemists. It is their property, and no one could refuse them the privilege of an admitted priority of fifteen centuries. They are the men who first demonstrated its effective realization, issuing from the unity of substance, the invulnerable basis of their philosophy. Furthermore, we ask why modern science, gifted with multiple and powerful means, rigorous methods served by precise and perfected tools, took so long to recognize the veracity of the hermetic principle? Then are we entitled to conclude that the ancient alchemists, using very simple processes, had nevertheless experimentally discovered the formal proof capable of imposing the concept of metallic transmutation as an absolute truth. Our predecessors were neither insane nor impostors, and the mother idea which guided their works, the very one which

infiltrates scientific spheres of our times, is foreign to the hypothetical principles, whose fluctuation and vicissitudes of which our rimes have no idea.

We assert therefore, without taking sides, that the great scientists whose opinions we have quoted are mistaken when they negate the lucrative result of transmutation. They are mistaken about the constitution and the profound qualities of matter, though they believe they have fathomed all its mysteries. Alas, the complexity of their theories, amount of words created to explain the inexplicable, and above all, the pernicious influence of materialistic education, pushes them to search far away for that which is within their reach. Mathematicians for the most part, lose in simplicity and common sense that which they gain in human logic and numerical rigor. They dream of imprisoning nature into a formula, of putting life into an equation. So, by successive deviations they unconsciously succeed in getting so far from simple truth that they justify the harsh words of the Gospel: "They have eyes not to see and minds not to understand!".

Would it be possible to bring these men back to a less complicated conception of things, to guide these lost ones towards the light of spirituality which they are lacking? We shall attempt it, and shall first say, addressing those who are willing to follow us, that living nature is not to be studied outside of its activity. The analysis of the molecule and the atom teaches nothing: It is incapable of resolving the most elevated problem that a scientist is capable of presenting: What is the essence of this invisible and mysterious dynamism which animates substance? For what do we know of life, except that we find its physical consequence in the phenomenon of movement. Everything is life and movement on this earth. Vital activity, very apparent in animals and vegetables, is no less apparent in the mineral kingdom, although it requires sharper attention by the observer. Metals are indeed living and sensitive bodies. Proofs are: the mercury thermometer, silver salts, fluorides, etc. What is dilation and contraction if not two effects of metallic dynamism, two manifestations of mineral life? Yet, it is not enough for the philosopher to only notice the elongation of an iron bar submitted to heat, he must know that metal under the influence of caloric radiations opens its pores, distends its molecules, and increases its surface and volume. It 'blooms' in a manner of speaking, as we ourselves do under the action of the benevolent solar effluvia. It cannot therefore be denied that such a reaction has a profound non material cause, for we would not know how to explain without this impulse what other force would oblige crystalline particles to leave their apparent inertia. This metallic will, the very soul of metal, is clearly made evident in one of the beautiful experiments by Ch.-Ed. Guillaume. A calibrated steel bar is submitted to a continuous and progressive traction whose power is measured with the aid of a dynamograph. When the bar is about to give, it shows a constriction, and the exact spot is marked. The extension ceases, and the bar is restored to its original dimensions, then the experiment is begun again. This time the constriction occurs in a point different from the first. By following the same technique, we will notice that all points on the bar have been successively treated, giving in one after the other to the same traction. And, if we calibrate the steel bar one last time, starting the experiment again from the very beginning, we verify that we need to use a much greater force than the one used first in order to provoke the return of the rupture symptoms. Ch.-Ed. Guillaume concludes from these experiments, with much reason, that the metal behaved as an organic body would have done. It has successively reinforced all its weak parts and purposefully increased its coherence to better defend its integrity. An analogous teaching can be derived from the study of saline crystallized compounds. If the angle of intersection of any crystal is broken and if it is plunged thus mutilated back into the mother liquor which produced it, not only does it immediately repair its wound, but it also grows with a greater speed than that of intact crystals which had remained in the same solution. We discover yet another evident proof of metallic vitality in the fact that in the United States, the tracks of

railroads show without any apparent reason the effects of an unusual evolution. Nowhere are the derailings more frequent or the catastrophes more inexplicable. Engineers charged with the study of the cause of these multiple ruptures attribute them to "premature aging" of the steel. Under the probable influence of special climatic conditions, the metal ages quickly, early; it loses its elasticity, malleability, resistance; its tenacity and cohesion seem lessened, to the extent that it becomes dry and brittle. Moreover, this metallic degeneration is not uniquely limited to rails. It also extends its ravages to the armor plates of battleships which are generally taken out of service after a few months of usage. Upon testing, we are surprised to see them break into several pieces under the shock of a mere drop ball. The weakening of the vital energy, normal and characteristic phase of decrepitude, of the senility of the metal, is the precursor sign of its coming death. Since death, corollary of life, is the direct consequence of birth, it follows that metals and minerals manifest their subjection to the law of predestination which rules all created beings. To be born, to live, to die, or to transform oneself are the three stages of a unique period embracing all physical activity. And since this essential function of this activity is to renew, to continue oneself, and to produce oneself through regeneration we are brought to believe that metals as well as animals and vegetables, bear in themselves the faculty of multiplying their species.

Such is the analogical truth that alchemy has tried to practice. And, such is also the hermetic idea, which it has seemed necessary to us to emphasize first of all. So, philosophy teaches and experimentation demonstrates that metals, thanks to their own "seed", can be reproduced and developed in quantity. Anyway, this is what the word of God reveals in Genesis, when the Creator transmits a particle of His activity to creatures issued from His very substance. For the divine logos, grow and multiply does not apply uniquely and only to man. It is meant for the entirety of living beings spread throughout nature.

(1) A. Etard; *Revue Annuelle de Chimie pure (Annual Review of Pure Chemistry)*, in *Revue des Sciences*, Sept. 30, 1896, p. 775.

(2) J. Duclaux; *La Chimie de la Matière vivante (Chemistry of Living Matter)*, Paris, Alcan, 1910, p. 14.

(3) See *The Cosmopolite or Nouvelle Lumière Chimique (New Chemical Light)*, Paris, 1669, p. 50

(4) *Lettre sur la Philosophie Chimique (Letter on Chemical Philosophy)* in *Revue des Sciences*, Dec. 30, 1896, p. 1227.

(5) *Comment l'Esprit vient aux tables (How the Spirit Comes to Tables)*, by a man who has not lost his mind/spirit; Paris, Libr. Nouvelle, 1854, p. 150.

(6) Lemery; *Cours de Chymie (Chemistry Course)*, Paris, d'Houry, 1757.

(7) "An artless art, of which the beginning is to lie, the middle is to labor, and the end is to beg".

(8) Was Pascal an alchemist? Nothing allows us to claim that he was. What is more certain is that he must have realized the transmutation himself, unless he saw it accomplished before his eyes in the laboratory of an Adept. The operation lasted two hours. This is what comes out of a curious document, on paper, handwritten by him in mystical style and which was found sewn in his garment at the time of his burial. Here is the beginning of it, which is the essential part:

"The Year of Grace, 1654; Monday, the 23rd of November, day of St Clement, pope and martyr and of others in the martyrology, Vigil of St Chrysogonus, martyr, and others, from around ten-thirty in the evening until

approximately twelve-thirty after midnight, Fire. God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob, not of Philosophers and of Savants. Certainty, Certainty, Feeling, Joy, peace".

We have purposefully underlined, although it was not so in the original text, the word Chrysogonus which the author uses to refer to the transmutation; it is formed of two Greek words: [*57-1] (*Chrysos*), gold, and [*57-2] (*gone*), generation. Death, which usually takes away men's secret, had to deliver up that of Pascal, *philosophus per ignem* (Philosopher by fire).

(9) Ernest Bosc; *Dictionnaire d'Orientalisme, d'occultisme et de Psychologie* (*Dictionary of Orientalism, Occultism, and Psychology*), Vol. 1.

(10) Chevreul left his hermetic library to the Museum d'Histoire Naturelle (Museum of Natural History)

(11) Cf. *La Revue*, #18, Sept. 15, 1912, p. 162, et seq.

(12) "Je sais tout". Le fabrication synthetique de l'or est-elle possible?; #194, Feb. 15, 1922.

VI

HERMETIC CABALA

Alchemy is obscure only because it is hidden. The philosophers who wanted to transmit the exposition of their doctrine and the fruit of their labors to posterity took great care not to divulge the art by presenting it under a common form s that the layman could not misuse it. Thus, because of the difficulty one has of understanding it, because of the mystery of its enigmas and of the opacity of its parables, the science has come to be shut up among reveries, illusions, and chimeras.

In fact these sepia-toned old books are not easily penetrated. To try to read them the way we read ours would be a mistake. Nevertheless, the first impression we receive from them, as strange and confusing as it may seem, remains vibrant and persuasive. Beyond the allegorical language and the abundance of ambiguous nomenclature, we fathom in them this ray of truth, this profound conviction born from certain facts, duly observed, and which owe nothing to the whimsical speculations of pure imagination.

You may probably object that the best hermetic works contain many gaps, accumulate contradictions, are embellished with false recipes; you may say that the *modus operandi* varies from one author to the next and that, if the theoretical development is the same with all, descriptions of the bodies used, on the other hand, rarely show a rigorous similarity among themselves. We shall answer that the philosophers had no other means at their disposal to steal from the ones what they wanted to expose to the others, but this confusion of metaphors, of diverse symbols, this prolixity of terms, of capricious formulas traced by the flow of a pen, expressed in clear language for the use of the greedy or the foolish. As for the argument about practice, it falls by itself for the simple reason that since the initial matter can be considered under any one of the multiple appearances which it takes during the course of the work, and since the artists never describe more than one part of the technique, as many distinct processes appear to exist as there are writers of the genre.

After all we should not forget that the treatises which have reached us were composed during the most beautiful alchemical period, the one which embraces the last three centuries of the Middle Ages. And at that time, folk mentality, totally impregnated with oriental mysticism, was fond of riddles, symbolic veils, allegorical expressions. This disguise flattered the rebellious instinct of the masses and provided the nobles with a new source for satiric verve. In this manner, it conquered general favor and was encountered everywhere, firmly established at the different levels of the social ladder. It shined in clever words during conversations among cultivated people, aristocrats and bourgeois, and it was vulgarized among vagrants in naive puns. It adorned shopkeepers' signboards with picturesque riddles and took hold of heraldry whose exoteric rules and protocol it established; it forced its multicolored costume of images, enigmas, and emblems on art, literature, and especially on esotericism.

To it we owe the variety of curious street signs whose number and singularity still add to the clearly original character of French medieval productions. Nothing shocks our modern sense more than these tavern placards oscillating on a wrought iron axis. We recognize, on one of them, the letter O capitalized followed by a K which has been struck out ⁽¹⁾; but the drunkard of the 14th century was not deceived and entered the great tavern without hesitation.

Hostelries often put up a golden lion fixed in heraldic pose, which for the traveler seeking out accommodation meant that "one could sleep there", because of the double meaning and pun of the image ⁽²⁾. Edouard Fournier ⁽³⁾ explains that "*la rue du Bout-du-Monde*" (the street at the End of the World) existed in Paris in the 17th century. "This name", adds the author, "which came from the fact that it had for a long time been near the walls of the city, had been represented in a *rebus* on the tavern sign. It had been represented by a bone (*os*), a he-goat (*bouc*), a horned owl (*duc*) and a world (*monde*)" ⁽⁴⁾.

Next to the blazon of the hereditary nobility's heraldry, we discover another form of blazonry whose armorial bearings are merely expressive tributaries of the rebus. The latter describe commoners, arrived by fortune at the rank of persons of quality. Francois Myron, Parisian magistrate in 1604, thus wore one "of gules a round mirror", (*Myre-rond*) ⁽⁵⁾. A *nouveau riche* of the same kind, head of the monastery of St Bartholomew in London, Prior Bolton, who occupied the office from 1532 to 1539, had his coat of arms carved in the bow window of the triforium from where he watched over the pious exercises of his monks. We can see an arrow (*bolt*) piercing a little barrel (*tun*), hence Bolton (**Plate III**). In his *Enigmas of the Streets of Paris*, Edouard Fournier, whom we have just quoted, after having initiated us into the disputes between Louis XIV and Louvois during the building of the Hotel des Invalides in Paris, the latter wanting to place his coat of arms next to that of the King, thereby contravening the orders of the King, tells us that Louvois arranged in some manner to affix his memory on the Invalides in an immutable and very obvious manner.

"Enter the Court of Honor of the Hotel, look at the garret windows which crown the facades of the quadrilateral monument; when you look at the fifth of these garret windows which are aligned at the summit of the eastern bay near the church, examine it well. Its ornamentation is very unusual. You find a wolf sculpted up to the waist; its paws falling on the opening of a bull's-eye window which they surround; the head is half hidden under a clump of palm leaves and the eyes are firmly fixed on the courtyard ground. There is here, without your suspecting it, a monumental pun --- the kind often made through imagery of heraldry --- and in this stone pun lies the conceited minister's revenge and satisfaction. This wolf looks, this wolf sees ⁽⁶⁾. It is his emblem! So that no one could doubt it, on the next garret window to the right, he had sculpted an exploding barrel of powder, a symbol of war, whose impetuous minister he was; on the left hand window, a panache of ostrich feathers, attributes of a high and powerful lord, as he claimed to be; and on the other two garret windows of the same bay, an owl and a bat, birds of vigilance, his great virtue. Colbert (another minister), whose fortune had the same origin as that of Louvois, and who had no less vainglorious pretensions to nobility, had taken as his emblem the grass snake ⁽⁷⁾, just as Louvois had chosen the wolf".

The fondness for the rebus, last echo of the sacred language, has considerably weakened in our day. It is barely cultivated and it scarcely interests school children of the present generation. By ceasing to give the science of blazonry the means to decipher its enigmas, the rebus has lost the esoteric value it once possessed. We find it today list in the last pages of magazines, where, as a recreational pastime, its role is confined to the expressive image of a few proverbs. Barely do we notice, once in a great while, a proper application of this fallen art, frequently directed to advertising purposes. Thus a large modern firm, specializing in the manufacture of sewing machines, adopted for its publicity a well-known poster. It represents a seated woman working at the sewing machine in the center of a majestic S. People see above all the initial of the manufacturer, although the rebus, is clear with its transparent meaning: this woman sews in her pregnancy ⁽⁸⁾, which is an allusion to the softness of the mechanism.

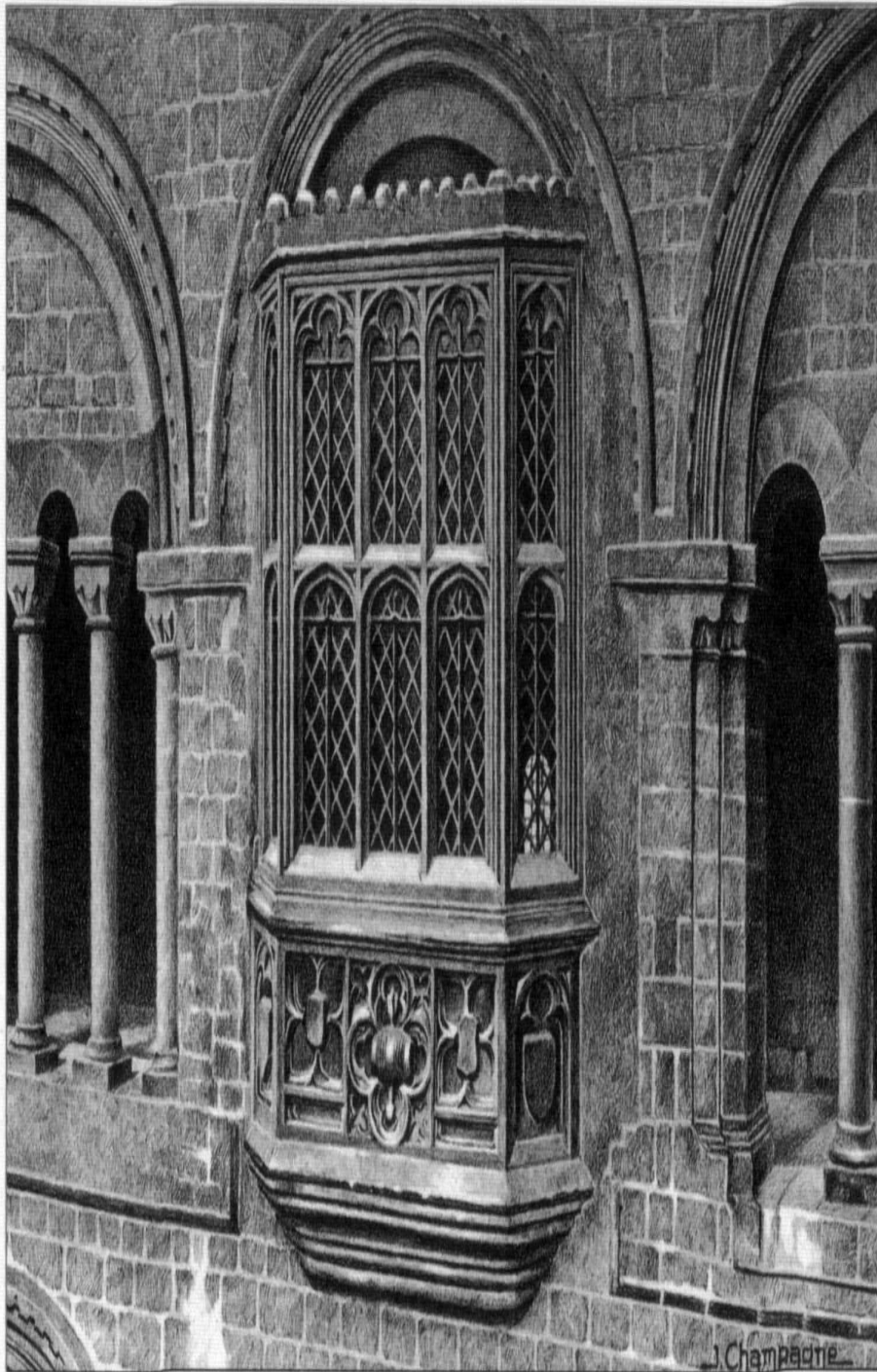


Plate III

LONDON - SAINT BARTHOLOMEW CHURCH - TRIFORIUM
The Bow Window of Prior Bolton

Time, which ruins and devours human work, has not spread the old hermetic language. Indifference, ignorance, and oblivion have completed the disintegrating action of centuries. Nevertheless, one could not maintain that it has been lost completely; a few initiates preserve its rules and know how to make advantage of the resources it offers in the transmission of secret truths or use it as a mnemonic key to teaching.

In the year 1843, conscripts assigned to the 46th Infantry Regiment in garrison in Paris could every week meet a rather unusual professor crossing the courtyard of the Louis-Philippe barracks. According to an eyewitness --- one of our relatives, a non-commissioned officer at the time, who assiduously followed his lessons --- he was a man still young, carelessly dressed, with long hair falling in curls on his shoulders, whose very expressive physiognomy bore the imprint of a remarkable intelligence. In the evening he taught the soldiers who desired it the history of France for a small sum, and he used a method which he insisted was known since the oldest antiquity. In reality, this class, so seductive for its students, was based on the traditional phonetic cabala ⁽⁹⁾.

A few examples, chosen among the ones that we remember, will give a rough idea of the process.

After a short preamble on approximately ten conventional signs, destined by their form and their grouping to help retrieve all historical dates, the professor drew on the blackboard a very simplified drawing. This image, which was easily engraved on the memory, was in a way the complete symbol of the reign studied.

The first of these drawings showed a man standing up in top of a tower and holding a torch in his hand. On a horizontal line representing the ground, three accessories were placed next to each other: a chair, a cross, a plate. The explanation of the drawing was simple. That which the man was raising in his hand was used as a beacon --- beacon in hand or in French, phare a mains, phonetically identical to the name Pharamond ⁽¹⁰⁾. The tower supporting him signified the number 1: Pharamond was, it is said, the first King of France. Finally, the chair, a hieroglyph of the number 4, the cross, that of the number 2, and the plate, sign of zero, gives the number 420, presume date of the crowning of the legendary king.

Clovis, we did not know it, was one of those scamps who could only be controlled with strong means Turbulent, aggressive, bellicose, quick to break everything, he thought of nothing but mischief and fights. His good parents, as much to subdue him as to give a measure of prudence, had screwed him onto his chair. The entire court knew that he was held by a screw ⁽¹¹⁾. The chair and the two hunting horns placed on the ground provided the date 466.

Clotaire, of an indolent nature, promenaded his melancholy in a field surrounded by walls; the unfortunate was thus closed in his land ⁽¹²⁾ --- Clotaire.

Chilperic --- we don't know why --- was writhing in a frying pan like a simple catfish, screaming out of breath: I am dying here! ⁽¹³⁾, hence Chilperic.

Dagobert, putting on the bellicose appearance of a warrior, brandished a dagger and was clothed in a mail, hence Dagobert ⁽¹⁴⁾.

Saint Louis --- who would have thought? --- highly esteemed the polish and shine of freshly minted golden coins; he spent his free time melting his old *louis* (the coin of the period) in order to have new ones ⁽¹⁵⁾ which also stands for *Louis Neuf*: Louis IX.

And as for the little corporal --- grandeur and decadence --- his blazon needed no character. A table covered with a tablecloth and supporting an ordinary saucepan were enough to identify him --- Napoleon ⁽¹⁶⁾.

These puns, these plays on words, associated or not with the rebus, were used by the initiates as subterfuges for their verbal conversations. In acroamatic works, anagrams were reserved, sometimes to disguise the title, removing from the layman the directing thought of the work. It is the case in particular of a small and curious book so cleverly closed that it is impossible to know what the subject of it is. It is attributed to Tiphaigne de la Roche, and it bears the unusual title of *Amilec ou la graine d'hommes* ⁽¹⁷⁾. It is an assemblage of anagrams and puns. One should read instead, *Alcmie, ou la crème d'Aum* (*Alchemy, or the Cream of Aum*). Neophytes will learn that it is an authentic alchemical treatise, since in the 13th century alchemy was written *alkimie*, *alkemie*, or *alkmie*; that the point of science revealed by the author pertains to the extraction of the spirit enclosed in the material prima, a philosophical virgin, which bears the same sign as the celestial Virgin, the monogram AUM; and that finally this extraction must be accomplished using a process analogous to that which allows us to separate cream from milk, which was also taught by Basil Valentine, Tollius, Philalethes, and the characters of the *Liber Mutus*. By removing the veil from the title, one can see how suggestive this one is, since it announces the revelation the revelation of the secret means suitable to obtain this cream of the milk of the Virgin which few researchers have had the fortune of possessing. Tiphaigne de la Roche, who is almost totally unknown, was nevertheless one of the most learned Adepts of the 18th century. In another treatise entitled *Giphantie* (an anagram of Tiphaigne), he perfectly describes the photographic process, and shows that he knew the chemical manipulations concerning the developing and fixing of the image one century before its discovery by Daguerre and Niepce de Saint-Victor.

Among the anagrams destined to cover up the names of their authors, we will indicate the one of Limojon de Saint-Didier: *Dives sicut ardens* ⁽¹⁸⁾, which is to say: *Sanctus Didiereus*; and the motto of President d'Espagnet: *Spes mea est in agno* ⁽¹⁹⁾. Other philosophers preferred to clothe themselves in cabalistic pseudonyms more directly related to the science that they professed. Basil Valentine mixes the Greek [*73-1] (*Basileus*), King, with the Latin *Valens*, powerful, to indicate the surprising power of the philosophers' stone. The word Eirenaeus Philalethes appears to be composed of three Greek words: [*73-2] (*Eirenaios*), peaceful, [*73-3] (*philos*), friend, and [*73-4] (*aletheia*), truth; Philalethes thus introduces himself as the pacific friend of truth. Grassaeus signed his works Hortulanus, signifying the gardener (Hortulanus) --- of maritime gardens, he carefully stressed. Ferrari is a blacksmith monk (*ferrarius*), working with metals. Musa, disciple of Calid, is [*73-5] (*Mystes*), the Initiate, while his master --- master if us all --- is the heat produced by the athanor (Latin *calidus*, burning). *Haly* means salt, in Greek [*73-6] (*als*), and the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid are those of the philosophers' egg (*ovum, ovi*). Archelaus is rather the title of a book than the name of an author, i.e., the principle of the stone, from the Greek word [*73-7] (*Arche*), principle, and [*73-8], *stone*. Marcel Palingene combines Mars, iron, [*73-9] (*helios*), the sun, and *Palingenesia*, regeneration, to designate that he was realizing the regeneration of the sun, or gold, through iron. Jean Austri, Gratian, Etienne divide among themselves the winds (*austri*), grace (*gratia*), and the crown [*73-10, *Stephanos*]. Famanus takes as his emblem the famous chestnut, so renowned among the wise men: *Fama-nux*, the famous nut, and Jean de Sacrobosco ⁽²⁰⁾ is especially thinking of the mysterious consecrated wood. Cyliani is the equivalent of *Cyllenous* (of Cyllene), a mountain of Mercury, which gave its name to the Cyllenien god. As for the modest Gallinarius ⁽²¹⁾, he is content with the hen house and poultry yard where the yellow chick, born from the egg of a black hen, will soon become our wonderful hen ⁽²²⁾ that laid the golden eggs.

Without completely abandoning these linguistic artifices, the old masters, in the composition of their treatises, used hermetic cabala above all, which they also called the language of the birds, of the gods, the gay science, or the gay knowledge ⁽²³⁾. In this manner they were able to hide from the common people the principles of their science by clothing them with a cabalistic cloak. This is an indisputable and well-known fact. But what people are generally unaware of is that the idiom from which the authors borrowed their terms is archaic Greek, the mother tongue according to the majority of Hermes disciples. The reason why we do not notice the cabalistic intervention owes precisely to the fact that French comes directly from the Greek. Consequently, all the words chosen in our language to define certain secrets have their orthographic or phonetic Greek equivalents, and it suffices to know them well to immediately discover their exact reestablished meanings. For, if French is truly Hellenic as to its basis, its meaning became modified in the course of centuries as it went further from its source and before the radical transformation that the Renaissance had it undergo --- decadence hidden under the name of reform.

The imposition of hidden Greek words under corresponding French terms of a similar texture but of amore or less corrupted meaning allows the investigator to easily penetrate the intimate thought of the masters and gives him the key to the hermetic sanctuary. We have used this means after the example of the ancients, and we will frequently have recourse to it in the analysis of the symbolic works, bequeathed to us by our ancestors.

Many philologists no doubt will not share our opinion and will remain convinced, along with the popular masses, that our language is of Latin origin only because they received that first notion on school benches. We ourselves believed and for a long time accepted what was taught by our teachers as the expression of truth. Only later, in researching the proofs of this purely conventional filiation, we had to recognize the vanity of our efforts and to reject the error born from classical prejudice. Today nothing could undermine our conviction confirmed many times by the success obtained in the realm of material phenomena and of scientific results. That is why we resolutely assert, without denying the introduction of Latin elements into our idiom since the Roman conquest, that our language is Greek, that we are Hellenes, or more exactly, Pelagians.

To defenders of Neo-Latinism such as Gaston Paris, Littré, Menage, presently more clear-sighted, open-minded and free masters such as Hins, J. Lefebvre, Louis de Fourcand, Granier de Cassagnac, Abbot Espagnolle (J.-L. Dartois), etc., oppose themselves. And we willingly take side with them, because we know that in spite of appearances they saw accurately, they judged soundly, and that they follow the simple and straight way of truth, the only one capable of leading to great discoveries.

"In 1872", wrote J.L. Dartois ⁽²⁴⁾, "Granier de Cassagnac, in a marvelously erudite and pleasantly styled work entitled: History of the Origins of the French Language, pointed out the inanity of the neo-Latinism thesis which pretends to prove that French is evolved Latin. He showed that it was not defensible and that it shocked history, logic, and common sense, and that, finally, our idiom refused it ⁽²⁵⁾". A few years later, M. Hins in turn proved in a very well documented study published in the *Review of Linguistics* that all the works of Neo-Latinism only allowed us to conclude a kinship with it, not a direct connection with the so-called Neo-Latin languages. Finally, Monsieur J. Lefebvre in two remarkable and much read articles published in June 1982 in *The New Review*, demolished the Neo-Latinism thesis from beginning to end by proving that Abbot Espagnolle in his book *The Origin of French* was indeed right; that our language, as the greatest scholar of the 16th century had guessed, was Greek; that Roman domination in Gaul had only covered our language with a thin layer of

Latin, in no way altering its genius". The author further adds: "If we ask Neo-Latinism to explain how the Gallic people, which counted at least seven million inhabitants, could forget their national language and learn another one, or rather change the Latin language into the Gallic language which is more difficult; how the Roman legionaries, who themselves for the most part did not speak Latin and were stationed in fortified camps separated from each other by vast spaces, were nevertheless able to become the teachers of the Gaulish tribes and teach them the language of Rome, that is to say, to accomplish among the Gauls alone a miracle that the other Roman legions were not able to accomplish anywhere else, neither in Asia, nor in Greece, nor in the British Isles; how, finally, the Basques and the Bretons succeeded in maintaining their languages while their neighbors, the inhabitants of Bearn, Maine and Anjou lost theirs and were forced to speak Latin. What would Neo-Latinism tell us?". This objection is so serious that it is Gaston Paris, the head of the School of Neo-Latinism, who is charged with answering it. "We Neo-Latins", he says in substance, "are not obliged to resolve the difficulties that logic and history may raise; we are only concerned with the philological fact and this fact dominates the question, since it proves, alone, the Latin origin of French, Italian, and Spanish"... "Assuredly", answers Monsieur J. Lefebvre, "the philological fact would be decisive if it were properly established, but it is not so at all. With all the possible subtleties of the world Neo-Latinism in fact only succeeds to observe this very banal truth, that there is a great quantity of Latin words in our language. This has never been contested by anyone".

As for the philological fact invoked but in no way proven by Gaston Paris, in order to attempt to justify his thesis, J.L. Dartois shows its lack of existence based upon the works of Petit-Radel. "To the pretended Latin philological fact", he writes, "we can oppose the evident Greek philological fact. This new philological fact, the only true one, the only demonstrable one, has a capital significance, since it proves without doubt that the tribes which came to people Western Europe were Pelagian colonies, and it confirms the beautiful discovery of Petit-Radel. We know that the modest, humble scholar read in 1802 before the Institute a remarkable work in order to prove that the polyhedral block monuments which are found in Greece, Italy, and France, and even in the heart of Spain and which were attributed to the Cyclops, are the work of the Pelagians. This demonstration convinced the Institute and no doubt has been raised since about the origin of these monuments. The language of the Pelagians was archaic Greek, above all made up of the Aeolian and Doric dialects, and it is exactly this form of Greek which is found everywhere in France, even in Parisian slang (*Argot d'Paris*)".

The language of the birds is a phonetic idiom solely based on assonance. Therefore, spelling, whose very rigorousness serves as a check for curious minds and which renders unacceptable any speculation realized outside the rules of grammar, is not taken into account. "I am only attached to useful things", says St Gregory in the 6th century in a letter which serves as a preface to his *Morals*, "without caring about style or the use of prepositions or endings, since it is not worthy of a Christian to subject the words of the Scriptures to the rules of grammar". This means that the sense of sacred books is not literal and that it is essential to know how to recover their spirit through cabalistic interpretation, as is the custom for understanding alchemical works. The rare authors who have spoken of the language of the birds give it first place in the origin of languages. Its antiquity would go back to Adam who, according to the command of god, would have used it to impose suitable names, appropriate to define the characteristics of created beings and things. De Cyrano Bergerac⁽²⁶⁾ gives an account of this tradition when, as a new inhabitant of a world near the sun, hermetic cabala is explained to him by "a naked little man seated on a stone", an expressive figure of simple, naked truth seated on the natural stone of the philosophers.

"I do not remember if I spoke to him first", says the great Initiate, "or if he was the one who questioned me; but I have a very fresh memory, as if I were still hearing him, of how he talked to me for three long hours in a language which I know I had never heard and which bears no relationship with any language of this world, but which I understand more quickly and more intelligibly than that of my wet nurse. He explained to me, when I inquired about such a marvelous thing, that in sciences there was a truth, beyond which we always found ourselves away from simplicity, and that the more an idiom strayed from this truth the more it went below our conception and became more difficult to understand. Similarly", he continued, "in music this truth is never encountered without our soul, immediately elevated, blindly going for it. We don't see it but we sense that Nature sees it; without being able to understand how it absorbs us, it cannot but delight us, although we cannot know where it is. And it is the same thing with languages. Whoever encounters this truth of letters, of words, and of continuity can never, while expressing himself, fall below conception: his speech is always equal to his thoughts; and because you do not have knowledge of this perfect language, you do not know what to say, not knowing the order or the words which could express what you imagine". I told him that the first man of our world indubitably used this language, since each name that he imposed on each thing declared its essence. He interrupted me and continued: "This language is not simply necessary to express everything that the mind conceives, but without it we cannot be understood by all. Since this idiom is the instinct or the voice of Nature, it must be understandable by everything that lives in the midst of Nature. This is why, if you knew it, you could communicate and disclose all your thoughts to animals, and animals to you all of theirs ⁽²⁷⁾, because it is the very language of Nature by which she makes herself understood by all animals. Therefore be no longer surprised by the ease with which you understand the meaning of a language which your ears have never heard. When I speak, your soul encounters, with each one of my words, the Truth that is gropingly looking for; and although its reason does not understand it, it has within it a nature which cannot but understand it".

However, this secret, universal, indefinite language, in spite of the importance and the truth of its expression, is in reality of Greek origin and genius, as our author teaches us in his *History of the Birds*. He has some very old oak trees speak --- an allusion to the language which the Druids used ([*78-1] --- *Druoidai*, from [*78-2] --- *Drys*, oak) --- in this manner: "Think of the oak trees which we feel you are looking at: it is we who are speaking to you, and if you are astonished that we speak the language used in the world whence you come, know that our first fathers are natives of it. They lived in Epire, in the forest of Dodona, where their natural goodness moved them to give oracles to the afflicted people who consulted them. For this purpose, they had learned the Greek language, the most universal then in existence, so as to be understood". Hermetic cabala was known in Egypt, at least by the priestly caste, as shown by the invocation of the Leyden Papyrus: "I invoke you, the most powerful of gods who has created everything, you born of yourself, who sees everything, without being seen... I invoke you under the name you possess in the language of the birds, in that of hieroglyphics, in that of the Jews, in that of the Egyptians, in that of the cynocephales... in that of the sparrow hawks, in the hieratic language". We also find this idiom among the Incas, sovereigns of Peru until the time of the Spanish conquest; the ancient writers called it *lengua general* (universal language), and *lengua cortesana* (language of the court), that is, diplomatic language, since it contains a double meaning corresponding to a double science, one apparent, the other profound ([*78-3] *diple*, double, and [*78-4], *mathe*, science). "The cabala", says Abbot Perroquet ⁽²⁸⁾, "was an introduction to the study of all sciences".

In presenting us the powerful figure of Roger Bacon, whose genius shines in the intellectual firmament of the 13th century like a star of the first magnitude, Armand Parrot ⁽²⁹⁾ describes

by what labor he was able to acquire the synthesis of ancient languages and how he possessed such a wide practice of the mother language that he was capable of using its techniques to teach in a very short time languages reputed to be the most difficult. One will admit that therein lies a truly marvelous particularly of this universal language which appears to us to be both the best key to the sciences and the most perfect method of humanism. "Bacon", the author writes, "knew Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic; thereby putting himself in a position to draw a rich education from ancient literature, he had acquired a reasoned knowledge of the two common languages which he needed to know, that of his native country and that of France. From these specific grammars a mind such as his could not but ascend to a general theory of language; he had opened for himself the two sources for which they flow and which are, on the other hand, a positive composition of several idioms and, on the one hand, the philosophical analysis of human understanding, the natural history of its faculties and concepts. Thus we find him almost alone in his century, applying himself to comparing vocabularies, bringing syntaxes together, looking for the relationships of language with thought, measuring the influence that character, movements, and such varied forms of discourses exert on the habits and the opinions of people. In this manner, he traced it back to the origins of all the simple or complex, fixed or variable, true or erroneous notions which the spoken word expressed. This universal grammar seemed to him to be true logic and the best philosophy; he attributed so much power to it that with the aid of such a science he believed he was capable to teach his young disciple, Jean de Paris, in one year what had taken him forty".

"Striking speed of education of common sense! Strange power", said Michelet, "to draw out, along with the electric spark, the preexisting science from man's brain".

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- (1) OK: *O grand K barre* which phonetically reads *Au grand cabaret*, at the great tavern
 - (2) To the Golden Lion, in French *Au Lion d'or* but also phonetically *au lit au dort*: in bed we sleep.
 - (3) Edouard Fournier, *Enigmes des rues de Paris (Enigmas of the Streets of Paris)*, Paris, E. Dentu, 1860.
 - (4) Bone-he-goat-horned owl-world, this list phonetically reads in French: *au bout du monde*, or At the End of the World.
 - (5) A pun on the man's name: Myron or *Myre-rond* phonetically in French can be read as round mirror.
 - (6) *Louvois* in French is phonetically identical with *Loup voit*, or wolf sees
 - (7) Latin: *coluber* for Colbert and in French: *couleuvre*
 - (8) Capital S --- in French gros S, phonetically close to *grossesse* meaning pregnancy
 - (9) The word cabala is a deformation of the Greek [***] (*karbau*), one who jabbars or speaks a barbaric language.
 - (10) There is here absolute identity of figuration and meaning with the cabala expressed in prints from old works, in particular The Dream of Polyphilo. In it King Solomon is always represented by a hand holding a willow branch (in French willow in hand: *sauile a main* is phonetically close to Solomon. A daisy in French *marguerite* sounds like I am missed. It is in this manner that one should analyze Pantagruel's and Gargantua's saying and ways of speech, if one wants to understand all that is inherent in the work of the powerful initiate that Rabelais was.

- (11) Held by a screw, in French, "*clos-a-vis*", which sound very much like Clovis.
- (12) Enclosed in his land, in French "*clos dans sa terre*", or Clotaire.
- (13) I am dying here, in French "*j'y peris*" which sounds close to Chilperic
- (14) Dagger and mail, in French *dague* and *haubert* sound like Dagobert.
- (15) Louis the Ninth can sound in French both like new *louis* (coins) or Louis Nine.
- (16) Tablecloth and saucepan in French, *nappe et poelon* --- Napoleon.
- (17) *Amilec or the Seed of Men* --- This very well written little book was published around 1753. It bears no indication as to where it was published or as to the name of the publisher.
- (18) Rich as well as fiery.
- (19) My hope is in the lamb.
- (20) *Sacrobosco* --- *sacro* sounds like Latin for sacred, and *bosco* sounds like the French for shrub hence: consecrated wood for Sacrobosco.
- (21) Gallinarius recalls the Latin word for hen: *gallus*.
- (22) Translator's note: In French fairy tales it is the hen and not the goose that lays the golden eggs, hence the pun.
- (23) Translator's note: Reference to Rabelais' and later to Nietzsche's writings.
- (24) J.L. Dartois: *Le Neo-Latinisme (Neo-Latinism)*, Paris, Societe des Auteurs-Editeurs, 1909, p. 6.
- (25) "Latin, a shameless synthesis of the rudimentary languages of Asia, but a simple intermediary linguistically speaking, a sort of curtain drawn over the world scene, was nothing but a vast swindle favored by a phonetic system different from ours which covered its thefts from it, and which must have been created after the Allia during the Senonaise occupation (390-345 BC)" --- quoted from A. Champrosay, *Les Illumines de Cabarose (The Enlightened of Cabarose)*, Paris, 1920, p. 54.
- (26) De Cyrano Bergerac, *L'Autre Monde. Histoire comique des Etats et Empires du Soleil (The Other World, Comical History of the States and Empires of the Sun)*, Paris, Bauche, 1910. J.J. Pauvert publisher, Paris, 1962, p. 170.
- (27) The famous founder of the Order of Franciscans, to which the illustrious Adept Roger Bacon belonged, knew hermetic cabala perfectly well; St Francis of Assisi knew how to speak with birds.
- (28) Perroquet, priest. *La Vie et le Martyre du Docteur Illumine, le Bienheureux Raymond Lulle (Life and Martyrdom of the Illumined Doctor, the blessed Raymond Lully)*, Vendome, 1667.
- (29) Armand Parrot: *Roger Bacon, sa personne, son genie, ses oeuvres et ses contemporains*, Paris, A. Picard, 1894, p. 48, 49.
- (30) Cf. *Epistle De Laude Sacrae Scripturae, ad Clement IV (In Praise of the Sacred Scriptures, to Clement IV)* -- De Gerando. *Histoire compareedes systemes de Philosophie*, vol. 4, Ch. 27, p. 541; *Histoire litteraire de la France*, vol. XX, p. 233-234.

VII

ALCHEMY AND SPAGYRICS

It is to be expected that a good number of chemists --- and some alchemists as well --- will not share our point of view. This will not stop us. Should we be regarded as the most resolute partisan of the most subversive theories, we would still not be afraid to develop our thought here, deeming truth to be endowed with many more attractions than a vulgar prejudice and that it remains preferable, in its very nakedness, to the most made-up and sumptuously dressed error.

Since Lavoisier, all the authors who have written on the history of chemistry agree to profess that our chemistry comes by direct affiliation from old alchemy. Consequently, the origin of the one is confused with that of the other, to such an extent that modern science would owe the positive facts on which it is built to the patient labor of the ancient alchemists.

This hypothesis, to which we could only have given a relative and conventional value, being regarded today as demonstrated truth, alchemical science, stripped of its own foundation, loses everything liable to motivate its existence, justify its reason for being. Thus, seen from a distance, under legendary mists and the veil of centuries, it only offers a vague, nebulous form, without consistency. An imprecise ghost, a lying specter, the marvelous and deceiving chimera indeed deserves to be relegated to the rank of illusions of yesteryear, of false sciences, as a very eminent professor notes ⁽¹⁾.

But where proofs would be necessary, where facts prove indispensable, people are content to oppose to hermetic "pretenses" a *petitio principii*. The School peremptorily does not discuss, it decides. Well, we in turn certify, proposing to prove it, that learned men who have in good faith espoused or propagated this hypothesis deluded themselves by ignorance or a lack of penetration. Understanding only in part the books they studied, they mistook appearance for reality. Let us clearly state, since so many educated and sincere people seem unaware of the fact, that the real ancestor of our modern chemistry is ancient spagyrics and not the hermetic science itself. There is indeed a profound abyss between spagyrics and alchemy. This is precisely what we will now try to demonstrate, in as much as it is expedient to do without exceeding the boundaries allowed. Nevertheless, we hope to extend our analysis far enough and to bring out sufficiently precise details to nourish our thesis. Furthermore, happy to provide the chemists, enemies of preconceived ideas, with a testimony of our good will and of our solicitude.

There was in the Middle Ages and possibly even in Greek antiquity, if we refer to the works of Zosimos and Ostanos --- two degrees, two orders of research in chemical science: spagyry and archemy. These two branches of the same exoteric art spread throughout the working class by means of laboratory practice. Metallurgists, goldsmiths, painters, ceramic artists, glassmakers, dyers, distillers, enamellers, potters, etc., had, as much as apothecaries, to be provided with sufficient spagyric knowledge. They perfected this knowledge themselves later on in the exercise of their profession. As for archemists, they formed a special category, more restricted, more obscure also, among the ancient chemists. The aim which they pursued presented some analogy with that of the alchemists, but the materials and the means which they had at their disposal were uniquely chemical materials and means. To transmute metals into one another, to produce gold and silver from coarse minerals, or from saline metallic compounds, to force the gold potentially contained in silver and the silver potentially contained in tin to become real and extractable, was what the archemist had in mind. In the

final analysis, he was a spagyrist confined to the mineral realm and who voluntarily neglected animal quintessences and vegetable alkaloids. And since medieval laws forbade private possession of furnaces and chemical utensils without preliminary permission, many artisans, their work once finished, studied, manipulated, and secretly experimented in their cellars or their attics. They cultivated the science of the little particulars, according to the somewhat disdainful expression of the alchemists for these side activities unworthy of the philosopher. Without scorning these useful researchers, let us recognize that very often the most fortunate among them only obtained mediocre benefits, and that the same process, at first successful, later led to nil or uncertain results.

Nevertheless, in spite of their errors ---or rather because of them --- it is they, the alchemists, who provided first the spagyrist and later modern chemistry with the facts, methods, and operations they needed. These men, tormented with a desire to search everywhere and to learn everything, are the true founders of a splendid and perfect science to which they bestowed accurate observations, exact reactions, skillful manipulations, and painfully acquired techniques. Let us humbly salute these pioneers, these precursors, these great workers, and let us never forget what they did for us.

However, we repeat, alchemy has nothing to do with these successive contributions. Hermetic writings alone, misunderstood by profane investigators, were the indirect cause of discoveries which the authors had never anticipated. It is in this manner that Blaise de Vigenere obtained benzoic acid by sublimating benzoin; that Brandt could extract phosphorus by seeking the alkahest in urine; that Basil Valentine, a prestigious Adept who did not despise spagyric experiments, established the entire series of antimonial salts and the colloid of ruby gold ⁽²⁾; that Raymond Lully prepared acetone, and Cassius the purple of gold; that Glauber obtained sodium sulphate and Van Helmont recognized the existence of gases. But, with the exception of Lully and of Basil Valentine, all these researchers, wrongly classified among alchemists, were simple alchemists or learned spagyrist. This is why a famous Adept, author of a classical work ⁽³⁾, can say with much reason: "If Hermes, the Father of philosophers, was resurrected today, along with subtle Geber, and the profound Raymond Lully, our vulgar chemists ⁽⁴⁾ would not regard them as Philosophers, and would practically not condescend to number them among their disciples, because the latter would not know the manner of operating all these distillations, circulations, calcinations, and all these innumerable operations which our vulgar chemists invented for having misunderstood the allegorical writings of these Philosophers".

With their confused texts, sprinkled with cabalistic expressions, the books remain the efficient and genuine cause of the gross mistake that we indicate. For, in spite of the warnings, the objurgations of their authors, students persisted in reading them according to the meaning that they hold in ordinary language. They do not know that these texts are reserved for initiates, and that is essential, in order to understand them, to be in possession of their secret key. One must first work at discovering this key. Most certainly these old treatises contain, if not the entire science, at least its philosophy, its principles, and the art of applying them in conformity with natural laws. But if we are unaware of the hidden meaning of the terms --- for example, the meaning of Ares, which is different from Aries and is closer to Arles, Arnet, and Albait --- strange qualifications purposely used in the composition of such works, we will understand nothing of them or we will be infallibly led into error. We must not forget that it is an esoteric science. Consequently, a keen intelligence, an excellent memory, work, and attention aided by a strong will are not sufficient qualities to hope to become learned in this subject. Nicolas Grosparmy writes, "Such people truly delude themselves who think that we have only made our books for them, but we have made them to keep out all those who are not

of our sect" ⁽⁵⁾. Batsdorff, in the beginning of his treatise ⁽⁶⁾, charitably warns the reader in these terms, "Every prudent man", he says, "must first acquire the Science if he can; that is to say, the principles and the means to operate. Otherwise he should stop there, without foolishly using his time and his wealth. And so, I beg those who will read this little book to credit my words. I say to them once more, that they will never learn this sublime science by means of books, and that it can only be learned through divine revelation, hence it is called Divine Art, or through the means of a good and faithful master; and since there are very few of them to whom God has granted this grace, there are also very few who teach it". Finally, an anonymous author of the 18th century ⁽⁷⁾ gives other reasons for the difficulty that we encounter in deciphering the enigma: "Here is", he writes, "the first and true cause why nature has hidden this open and royal palace from so many philosophers, even those gifted with a very subtle mind. Because, straying since their youth away from the simple path of nature through conclusions of logic and metaphysics, although ingenious nature advances in a straight and very simple step in this path as in all the others".

Such are the opinions of the philosophers about their own works. How can we be surprised then, that so many excellent chemists took the wrong path, and that they deluded themselves by inquiring into a science whose most elementary notions they were incapable of assimilating? And would it not be a great service to render unto others, unto neophytes, to advise them to meditate upon this great truth which the *Imitation* (Book III, Ch. II, v.2) proclaims, when it says, speaking of the sealed books:

"They can make the sound of their words resound, but they do not provide any understanding at all. They give the letter, but it is the lord who unveils the meaning of them; they propose mysteries, but it is He who explains them. They show the path that must be followed, but He gives the strength for walking on it".

It is the stumbling block against which our chemists have tripped. And we can affirm that, if our scientists had understood the language of the ancient alchemists, the laws of the practice of Hermes would be known to them, and the philosophers' stone would long have ceased to be considered a chimera.

We have stated earlier that archemists regulated their works according to hermetic theory --- at least as they understood it --- and that this was the point of departure for fertile experiments with purely chemical results. Thus they prepared the acid solvents which we use, and through the action of these on metallic bases they obtained the saline series well known to us. By afterwards reducing these salts, either with other metals, with alkalies, coal, sugar or fatty bodies, they recovered, without transformation, the basic elements which they had previously combined. But these attempts as well as the methods which appeal to it showed no difference with those practiced today in our laboratories. A few researchers, nevertheless, pushed their investigations much further; they remarkably extended the field of chemical possibilities even to such a point that their results seem doubtful, if not imaginary, to us. It is true that these processes are often incomplete and enveloped in mystery almost as dense as that of the Great Work. Our intention being --- as we have announced --- to be useful to students, we will enter into this subject in some detail and show that these puffers' recipes offer more experimental certainty than we would be inclined to attribute to them. May the philosophers, our brothers whose indulgence we claim, condescend to forgive us these divulgations. However, besides the fact that our oath is only answerable to alchemy and that we intend to remain strictly in the spagyric domain, on the other hand, we wish to keep the promise we made, of demonstrating by real and controllable facts, that our chemistry owes everything to spagyricists and archemists and nothing, absolutely nothing, to hermetic Philosophy.

The simplest archemic process consists in using the effect of violent reactions --- that of acids on bases --- so as to provoke, in the midst of the effervescence, the reunion of the pure parts, their irreducible combination under the form of new bodies. It is then possible, from a metal close to gold --- silver preferably --- to produce a small quantity of the precious metal. Here is, in this order of experiments, an elementary operation whose success we certify provided our instructions are closely followed.

Pour into a tall tubular glass retort a third of its capacity of pure nitric acid. Attach to it a receiver with an exhaust tube and set the apparatus on a sand bath. Operate under a fume hood. Heat the apparatus gently without reaching the boiling point of the acid. Then stop the heat, open the neck and introduce a thin fraction of virgin or cupeled silver that contains no traces of gold. When the emission of nitric peroxide ceases and the effervescence has calmed down, allow a second portion of pure silver to fall into the liquor. Thus repeat the introduction of the metal, without haste, until the boiling and emission of red fumes manifest only little energy, signs of approaching saturation. Add nothing more, Let it settle for a half hour, then cautiously decant your clear, still-warm solution into a beaker. You will find at the bottom of the retort a thin deposit in the form of fine black sand. Wash it with lukewarm distilled water and let it drop into a small porcelain capsule. You will find out through testing that this precipitate is insoluble in hydrochloric acid, as it is in nitric acid. Aqua regia dissolves it and yields a magnificent yellow solution, absolutely similar to that of gold trichloride. Dilute this liquor with distilled water; precipitate it with a sliver of zinc; an amorphous powder, very fine, dull, of reddish-brown coloration will be deposited, identical with that given by natural gold reduced in the same manner. Properly wash, and then dry this powdery precipitate. By pressing it on a sheet of glass or marble, you will get a brilliant, coherent lamina, of a beautiful yellow shine in reflection, of a green color in transparency, having the appearance and the superficial characteristics of the purest gold.

In order to augment your minute deposit with a new quantity, you can do this operation as many times as you wish. In this case, take again the clear silver nitrate solution, diluted by the waters of the first washing; reduce the metal with zinc or copper; decant and abundantly wash when the reduction is complete. Dry this powdery silver and use it for your second dissolution. By continuing in this manner, you will amass enough metal to render the analysis much easier. Furthermore, you will be assured of its true production --- even if the silver that you originally used had some traces of gold.

But this simple body, so easily obtained, although in a very small proportion, is it truly gold? Our sincerity compels us to say no or, at least, not yet. For even if it shows the most perfect outer analogy to gold, and even most of its properties and chemical reactions, still one essential physical characteristics is missing: density. This gold is less heavy than natural gold, although its own density is already greater than that of silver. We can therefore regard it as, not the representative of a more or less unstable allotropic state of silver, but rather as a young, or nascent gold, which further reveals its recent formation. Moreover, the newly produced metal remains capable of taking and keeping, by contraction, the increased density that the adult metal possesses. Alchemists used a process which ensured nascent gold all the specific qualities of adult gold; they called this technique maturation or firming up, and we know that mercury was its principle agent. We find it mentioned in some ancient Latin manuscripts under the expression of *Confirmatio*.

It would be easy to make a few useful and consequential remarks about the operation just mentioned and to show on what philosophical principles lies the direct production of metal in this experiment. We could also give some variant likely to increase the yield, but we would

thereby overstep the limits that we have voluntarily imposed on ourselves. We will therefore leave to researchers the task of discovering them for themselves and of submitting the deduction of the control of experiments. Our role is confined to presenting facts; it is for modern alchemists, spagyrist, and chemists to conclude ⁽⁸⁾.

But alchemy has other methods, whose results bring the proof of philosophical affirmations. They allow us to achieve the decomposition of metallic bodies, long considered to be simple elements. These processes, which alchemists know well, although they don't have to use them in the elaboration of the Great Work, aim at extracting one of the two metallic roots, sulphur and mercury.

Hermetic philosophy teaches us that bodies have no action on bodies and that only spirits are active and penetrating ⁽⁹⁾. It is they, these spirits, these natural agents, that provoke in the midst of matter the transformations which we observe there, yet wisdom demonstrates through experimentation that bodies cannot form among themselves anything but easily reducible, temporary combinations. Such is the case of alloys, some of which are liquefied by simple fusion, and of all saline compounds. Similarly, alloyed metals maintain their specific qualities in spite of the diverse properties which they take on in the state of association. We can then understand of what usefulness the spirits can be in releasing the metallic sulphur or mercury when we know that they alone are capable of overcoming the strong cohesion which tightly binds these two principles between themselves.

It is essential first to understand what the Ancients meant by the generic and rather vague term of spirits.

For the alchemists, the spirits are real influences, although they are physically almost immaterial or imponderable. They act in a mysterious, inexplicable, unknowable but efficacious manner on substances submitted to their action and prepared to receive them. Lunar radiation is one of these hermetic spirits.

As for alchemists, their conception proves to be of a more concrete and substantial nature. Our old chemists embraced all bodies under the same heading, simple or complex, solid or liquid, having a volatile quality liable to make them entirely sublimable. Metals, metalloids, salts, hydrogen carbides, etc., bring to alchemists their contingency of spirits: mercury, arsenic, antimony and some of their compounds: sulphur, sal ammoniac, alcohol, ether, vegetable essences, etc.

The favorite technique to extract the metallic sulphur is the one which uses sublimation. Here are a few procedures given as indications.

Dissolve some pure silver in hot nitric acid according to the manipulation previously described, and then dilute this solution with hot distilled water. Decant the clear liquor so as to separate, if need be, the slight black deposit, mentioned earlier. Let it cool down in a dark laboratory and pour into the liquor little by little either a filtered solution of sodium chloride or pure hydrochloric acid. The silver chloride will precipitate to the bottom of the vessel in the form of a curdled white mass. After letting it sit for 24 hours, decant the acidulated supernatant water, wash it rapidly with cold water, and dry it spontaneously in a room where no light penetrates. Then weigh your silver salt, with which you will intimately mix three times as much of pure ammonium chloride. Put everything into a tall glass retort of such capacity that only the bottom of it is covered by the saline mixture. Give it a gentle heat in a sand bath and increase it by degrees. When the temperature is sufficient, the sal ammoniac

will rise up and cover the top and the neck of the apparatus with a firm layer. This snow-white, rarely yellowish sublimate might lead you to believe that it contains nothing special. Skillfully break the retort, carefully detach this white sublimate, dissolve it in distilled water, hot or cold. Once the dissolution has been achieved, you will find at the bottom a very fine, bright red powder; it is a part of the sulphur of silver or lunar sulphur, detached from the metal and volatilized by the sal ammoniac during its sublimation.

However, in spite of its simplicity, this operation does not proceed without some big problems. Although it seems simple, it demands great skill, a lot of prudence in the management of the heat. If you do not want to lose half and more of the metal, you must first and above all avoid the fusion of the salts. Yet, if the temperature does not reach the required degree to cause and maintain the fluidity of the mixture, no sublimation occurs. Furthermore, as soon as the temperature is established, the silver chloride, already very penetrating by itself, acquires such a bite in contact with the sal ammoniac, that it will pass through the glass walls ⁽¹⁰⁾ and escape outside. The artist cannot even resort to using stoneware, earthenware or porcelain retorts, which are even more porous than those of glass, all the more because he must constantly be able to observe the progress of the reactions if he wishes to be in a position to intervene at the right moment. Therefore, there are in this method, as in many others of the same order, certain secrets of practice which the alchemists have prudently reserved for themselves. One of the best ones consists in dividing the mixture of chlorides by interposing an inert body capable of impasting the salts and hindering their liquefaction. This matter must possess neither reducing qualities nor catalytic virtues; it is also essential that it can easily be separated from the caput mortuum. Formerly, pulverized brick was used and a variety of absorbents such as putty powder, pumice stone, pulverized flint, etc. Unfortunately, these substances yield a very impure sublimate. We give preference to a certain product which has no affinity for silver or ammonium chloride, which we extract from Judean bitumen. In addition to the purity of the sulphur obtained, the technique becomes very easy. We can easily reduce the residue into a metallic silver and reiterate the sublimations until the complete extraction of the sulphur. The residual mass is then no longer reducible and presents itself in the shape of a gray, soft, very sweet ash, greasy to the touch, which retains fingerprints and loses in a short time half of its weight of specific mercury.

This technique applies equally to lead. Less expensive, it offers the advantage of yielding salts that are insensitive to light, which eliminates the need for the artist to operate in darkness; impastation is then no longer necessary; finally, since lead is less fixed than silver, the yield of red sublimate is better and the duration shortened. The only fortunate aspect of the operation comes from the fact that the sal ammoniac forms with lead sulphur, a saline compact layer which is so tenacious that one could believe that it had melted with the glass. It becomes laborious to detach it without pounding. As for the extract itself, it is a beautiful red, covered by a brightly colored yellow sublimate, but very impure compared to that of silver. It is therefore necessary to purify it before using it. Its maturity too is less perfect, an important consideration if one's researches are oriented towards the obtaining of particular tinctures.

All metals do not yield to the same chemical agents. The process that is suitable for silver or lead cannot be applied to tin, copper, iron or gold. Further, the spirit capable of detaching and isolating the sulphur of a given metal will exercise its action with another metal on the mercurial principle of the latter. In the first case, the mercury will be strongly held while the sulphur will be sublimated; in the second case, the reverse phenomenon will occur. Hence the diversity of methods and variety of techniques of metallic decomposition. Moreover, it is above all the affinity that bodies manifest for other bodies and the latter for spirits that regulates their application. It is known that silver and lead have a very marked affinity for one

another; silvery lead ores prove it well enough. Therefore the affinity establishing the profound chemical identity of these bodies, it is logical to think that the same spirit, used in the same conditions, will bring about the same effects. This is what happens with iron and gold which are bound by a close affinity. When Mexican prospectors come to discover a sandy, very red earth composed mostly of iron oxide, they conclude that gold is not very far away. Consequently they regard this red earth as the matrix and the mother of gold, and the best indication of a nearby gold vein. This fact seems rather unusual, given the physical differences of these metals. In the category of common metallic bodies, gold is the rarest among them; iron, by contrast, is certainly the most common, the one that is found everywhere, not only in mines where it forms enormous and numerous deposits but also disseminated on the very surface of the ground. Clay owes to iron its special coloration, sometimes yellow when iron is found divided as a hydrate, sometimes red when it is in the form of sesquioxide, a color which is further intensified by baking (as in bricks, tiles and pottery). Of all the classified ores, iron pyrite is the most common and the best known. The black ferruginous masses in variously sized balls, in shell-like agglomerations, in nodules, are often encountered in fields, on the sides of paths, in chalky terrain. Country children often play with these marcasites which show a fibrous crystalline radiating texture when they are broken. Sometimes they contain small quantities of gold. Meteorites, chiefly composed of molten magnetic iron, prove that the interplanetary masses from which they come primarily owe their structure to iron. Certain vegetables contain assimilable iron (wheat, watercress, lentils, beans, potatoes). Man and vertebrates owe to iron and to gold the red coloration of their blood. Indeed, iron salts constitute the active element of hemoglobin. They are even so necessary to organic vitality that medicine and pharmacopoeia have at all times sought for ways to give impoverished blood the metallic compounds needed for its reconstitution (iron peptonate and carbonate). Common people still use water rendered ferruginous by the immersion of oxidized nails. Finally, iron salts present such a variety of colorations that we can be assured that they would suffice to reproduce all the tonalities of the spectrum, from violet which is the actual color of the our metal, all the way to intense red, the color that it gives to silica in various kinds of rubies and garnets.

This was enough to convince alchemists to work on iron with the purpose of discovering therein the components of their tinctures. Moreover, this metal easily allows the extraction of its sulphurous and mercurial constituents in one single manipulations, which is already very advantageous. The great, the enormous difficulty resides in the reunion of these elements which, in spite of their purification, energetically refuse to combine to form a new body. We shall continue without analyzing or resolving this problem, since our topic is simply to establish the proof that alchemists always used chemical materials set in motion by means of chemical operations.

In the spagyric treatment of iron, the energetic reaction of acids with a similar affinity for the metal is used to conquer its cohesion. Ordinarily, one starts with iron pyrites or with metal reduced to filings. In this last case we recommend prudence and precautions. If one uses pyrites, it will suffice to crush it as finely as possible and to redden it with fire once, while mixing it vigorously. Once it is cooled down, it is introduced into a large flask with four times its weight of aqua regia and the mixture is brought to a boil. After an hour or two it is allowed to rest, the liquid is decanted; then one pours onto the magma a similar quantity of fresh aqua regia, which is made to boil as before. It is necessary to continue the boiling and the decanting until the pyrites appear white at the bottom of the container. Then take all the extracts, filter them on fiberglass, and concentrate them through a slow distillation in a tubular retort. When only about one-third of the original volume is left, open the tubulature and pour in successive fractions a certain quantity of pure 66% sulphuric acid (60 grams for a total volume of extract

coming from 500 grams of pyrite). It is then distilled until dry and, after having changed receivers, the temperature is progressively increased. You will see some oily drops distill, red as blood, which represent the sulphurous tincture, and later a beautiful white sublimate which clings to the top and the neck in the form of a crystalline down. The sublimate is an authentic mercury salt --- called by certain alchemists mercury of vitriol--- which is easily reduced to liquid mercury through the agency of iron filings, quick lime, or anhydrous potassium carbonate. Furthermore, it is easy to immediately ensure that this sublimate contains the specific mercury of iron by rubbing its crystals on a sliver of copper: the amalgam immediately appears and the metal seems silvery.

As for iron filings, they yield a golden rather than red colored sulphur instead of being red, and some --- a very little bit --- of mercury sublimate. The process is the same but with the slight difference, that it is necessary to throw into the previously heated aqua regia pinches of filings and to wait for each one of them until the effervescence has stopped. It is good to mix up the bottom with an agitator to prevent the filings from becoming one mass. After filtration and reduction in half one adds --- very little at a time because the reaction is violent and the perturbation furious --- some sulphuric acid equal in weight to half of the concentrated liquid. This is the dangerous part of the manipulation since it is rather common to see the retort explode or crack at the level of the acids.

Here we conclude the description of the processes used on iron, deeming that they are amply sufficient to uphold our thesis, and we will end the exposition of spagyric processes by that of gold, which is, according to the opinion of all philosophers, the body the most refractory to dissociation. It is a common axiom in spagyrics that it is easier to make gold than to destroy it. But here we must add a brief remark.

Limiting our desire to simply prove the chemical reality of alchemical research, we will be wary of teaching in clear language how one can fabricate gold. The aim that we pursue is of a much higher order. We prefer to remain in the purely alchemical domain rather than engage the researcher in following thorn-covered paths lined with potholes. For the application of these methods confirming the chemical principles of direct transmutation would not being the least testimony in favor of the Great Work, whose elaboration remains completely foreign to the same principle. Having said this, let us resume our topic.

An old spagyric proverb claims that the seed of gold is in gold itself; we will not contradict it, provided it is understood what kind of gold is meant and how it is appropriate to grasp this "seed" disengaged from common gold. If we do not know the latter of these secrets we will necessarily have to be content with witnessing the production of the phenomenon, without receiving any benefits from it except for an objective certainty. So, observe attentively what occurs in the following operation, whose execution presents no difficulty.

Dissolve pure gold in aqua regia; pour sulphuric acid onto it equal in weight to half the weight of the gold. Only a slight contraction will occur. Agitate the solution and pour it into a glass retort without tubing, set on a sand bath. First give it a moderate heat, so that the distillation of the acids can take place slowly without boiling. When the distillation is over and the gold appears at the bottom in the form of a yellow, dull, dry, cavernous mass, change the receiver and progressively increase the heat of the flame. You will see some white, opaque vapors rise, light at first and then heavier. First it condenses into a beautiful yellow oil which flows into the receiver; second, the sublimate covers the top and the beginning of the neck with fine crystals, imitating the down of birds. Their color, a magnificent blood-red, takes on the brightness of ruby when a sun beam or some bright light comes to strike it. These crystals,

very deliquescent in the manner of other gold salts, disintegrate into a yellow liquid as soon as the temperature goes down...

We will not pursue the study of sublimations any further. As for the archemical processes known under the name of Little Particulars, they are most of the time risky techniques. The best of these processes starts with metallic products extracted in the manner we have described. A profusion of them will be found in a quantity of second-rate works and in puffers' manuscripts. For your information, we will only reproduce "the particular" which Basil Valentine ⁽¹¹⁾ mentions because, unlike the others, it is backed up by solid and pertinent philosophical reasons. The great Adept assures us in this passage that it is possible to obtain a particular tincture by uniting the mercury with the sulphur of copper through the agency of an iron salt. "The Moon", he says, "has in it a fixed mercury thereby it can bear the violence of fire longer than other imperfect metals; and the victory which it gains shows very well how fixed it is, since ravenous Saturn cannot take anything from it or diminish any of it. Lascivious Venus is well-colored and her entire body is almost nothing but tincture and color similar to that of the Sun. It approaches the color red because of its abundance. But since her body is leprous and ill, the fixed tincture cannot dwell there, and as the body flies away, the tincture must necessarily follow. The former having perished, the soul cannot remain; its domicile has been consumed by fire. No seat or refuge appears to it or is left to it. If, on the contrary, the latter is accompanied, it remains entirely with a fixed body. The fixed salt provides the warrior Mars a hard, strong, solid and robust body, wherefrom he gets his magnanimity and great courage. For this reason, it is very difficult to overcome this valorous captain, for his body is so hard that it can hardly be wounded. But if someone mixes his strength and hardness with the constancy of the Moon and the beauty of Venus, and harmonizes them through spiritual means, he will create in this manner a sweet harmony. After this, the poor man, having used for this purpose a few of the keys of our Art, after having climbed to the top of this ladder, and after having reached the completion of this Work, will be able to particularly earn his life. For the phlegmatic and humid nature of the Moon can be heated and dried by the hot and choleric blood of Venus and its great blackness corrected by the salt of Mars".

Among the archemists who used gold to augment it, making use of formulas which led them to success, we will note the Venetian priest Pantheus ⁽¹²⁾; Naxagorus, author of *Alchymia Denudata* (1715); de Locques; Duclos; Bernard de Labadye; Joseph du Chesne, baron of Morance, appointed physician to King Henry IV of France; Blaise de Vigenere; Bardin, of Le Havre (1638); Mlle. De Martinville (1610); Yardley, the English inventor of a process which he transmitted to Monsieur Garden, glover in London, in 1716, and later communicated by Monsieur Ferdinand Hockley to Dr Sigismund Bacstrom ⁽¹³⁾, and which became the object of a letter from the latter to M. L. Sand in 1804; finally, the pious philanthropist, St Vincent de Paul, founder of Les Peres de la Mission (The Fathers of the Mission --- 1625) and of the congregation of les Soeurs de la Charite (The Sisters of Charity --- 1634), etc.

Please allow us to stop for a moment to describe this great and noble figure, as well as his occult labor, which is generally unknown.

It is known that in the course of a voyage which he undertook from Marseilles to Narbonne, St Vincent de Paul was captured by Barbary pirates and brought as a captive to Tunis. He was at that time 24 years of age ⁽¹⁴⁾. We are also told that he succeeded in bringing back his last master, a renegade, into the lap of the Church; that he came back to France and that he stayed in Rome, where Pope Paul V received him with a great deal of respect. From this moment on he began his pious foundations and his charitable institutions. Yet what one took care not to

mention is that the Father of lost children, as he was called during his life, had learned archemy during his captivity. Thus we understand how, without the need for miraculous intervention, the great apostle of Christian charity had the means to realize his numerous philanthropic works ⁽¹⁵⁾. He was, furthermore, a practical, positive, resolute man who in no way neglected his practical affairs; in no way a dreamer or inclined to mysticism. He was a deeply human soul underneath the harsh appearance of an active, tenacious, and ambitious man.

Of him, we possess two very suggestive letters from the point of view of his chemical works. The first, written to Monsieur de comet, barrister of the provincial appellate court of Dax, was published several times and analyzed by Monsieur Georges Bois, in *The Occult Menace* (Paris, Victor Retaux, n.d.). It was written from Avignon and dated the 24th of June, 1607. We take this rather long document from the moment when Vincent de Paul, having completed the mission for which he was in Marseille, was preparing to return to Toulouse.

"And being about to leave by land", he says, "I was persuaded by a gentleman with whom I had stayed to embark with him as far as Narbonne, because of the fortunate weather conditions; which I did to get there earlier and save money, or better said, to never reach this place and to lose everything. The wind was a good as needed to bring us that day to Narbonne, which was 50 leagues away, if God had not allowed three Turkish brigantines that were cruising in the Gulf of Lions (to catch boats coming from Beaucaire, where a fair was taking place still regarded as the most beautiful of Christendom), to have hunted us down and attacked us so forcefully that two or three of our people were killed and all of the others wounded, including myself who was hit by an arrow, which I would have been able to use as a clock for the remainder of my days, if we then had not been forced to surrender to the scoundrels, worse than tigers; the first manifestation of their rage was to hack our pilot into a thousand pieces for the crime of having lost one of their head men besides four or five criminals whom our people had killed. This done, they chained us up, after having coarsely bandaged us. They continued their voyage committing a thousand thefts, nevertheless freeing those who surrendered without fighting, having robbed them; and finally, loaded down with merchandise, after seven or eight days, they sailed back to Barbary, den of the faithless thieves of the great Turk king, where having arrived, they put us for sale after having recounted our capture, which they said had been made on a Spanish ship, since without this lie we would have been freed by the King's consul who was there to make free trade possible for Frenchmen. For our sale, their procedure was, once having us stripped totally, to give us each a pair of shorts, a linen jacket, and a cap; they paraded us in the city of Tunis where they had come to sell us. After having been made to go round the city five or six times, chains around our necks, they brought us back to the ship so that the merchants could see which ones of us could eat and which could not, so as to show that our wounds were not mortal. This done, they brought us back to the market place where the merchants came to look at us in the same manner that is used when one purchases a horse or a cow, having us open our mouths to look at our teeth, feeling our ribs, probing our wounds, having us walk, trot, or run, and then having us carry heavy burdens and then fight one another to see the strength of each, and a thousand other kinds of brutalities.

"I was sold to a fisherman, who was forced to get rid of me very soon since no one agrees less with the sea than I do, and from the fisherman to an old man, a spagyric doctor, sovereign tyrant of quintessences, a very human and tractable man who, from what he told me, had worked for 50 years in search of the philosophers' stone, and in vain as far as the stone, but with good results as far as other transmutations of metals. In proof of which, I often saw him melt as much gold as silver together, putting them in little flakes and then introducing a layer

of some powder, and then other flakes and then another layer of powder in a crucible or in a goldsmith's smelting vessel, keep it in the fire for 24 hours, and then open it and find the silver turned into gold; and more often still, I saw him congeal or fix quicksilver into fine silver, which he sold to give to the poor. My job was to keep the fire in ten or twelve furnaces, in which, tank God, I had more pleasure than pain. He liked me quite a lot, and he liked to talk to me about alchemy, and more about its law, to which he made every effort to attract me, promising me great wealth and all his knowledge. God always kept in me a belief that I would be freed by the fervent prayers I addressed to him and to the Virgin Mary by whose unique intercession I firmly believe I was freed. Since I firmly hoped and believed that I would see you again, sir, I constantly asked him to teach me how to cure lithiasis, a miracle which I saw him perform daily; he did so, going so far as making me prepare and administer the ingredients...

"I stayed with this old man from the month of September, 1605, until the following August, when he was taken and brought before the Grand Sultan, so as to work him; but in vain, since he died of sorrow on the way. He left me to his nephew, true anthropomorphist, who sold me, too, soon after the death of his uncle, since he had heard that Monsieur de Breve, ambassador for the King in Turkey, was coming with good and authentic documents from the Grand Turk to recover Christian slaves. A renegade of Nice en Savoye, enemy of nature, purchased me and brought me to his *temat* (that is the Arabic name of the parcel of land which share croppers held from the great landlord since the people had nothing; everything belonged to the Sultan). The *temat* of this man was in the mountains, where the country is extremely hot and desert-like".

After having converted this man, Vincent left with him ten months later, "at the end of which", continues the writer, "we escaped on a skiff and we arrived on June 28 in Aigues-Mortes and soon thereafter, at Avignon, where Monsignor the Vice-Legate publicly received the renegade, teary-eyed and tears choking his throat, in the church of St Peter, for the glory of God and the edification of the spectators. The said Monsignor honored me with great love and fondness, because of the few secrets of alchemy that I taught him, which he made more of, he says, than *si io gli avessi dato un monte di oro* (16), because he has worked all his life for no other contentment..." --- Vincent Depaul ⁽¹⁷⁾.

In January, 1608, a second letter, addressed from Rome to the same addressee, shows Vincent de Paul initiating the vice-legate of Avignon, mentioned above, who was very well appreciated in court because of his spagyric secrets. "My condition is thus the following, in a word, that I am in this city of Rome, where I continue my studies supported by Monsignor the Vice-Legate, who comes from Avignon and who honors me with his love, and a desire for my advancement, since I have shown him many and beautiful and curious things which I had learned while I was a slave to the old Turk and to whom, as I wrote to you, I was sold, things among which is the beginning but not the total perfection of the mirror of Archimedes; an artificial trick to make a skull speak, by which this unfortunate man seduced the people, telling them that his god Mohammed let him know his will by this skull, and a thousand other beautiful, geometric things which I have learned from him, and about which Monsignor is so jealous that he does not even want me to talk to anyone, for fear that I teach someone else what I taught him, wishing to be the only one with the reputation of knowing these things which he occasionally likes to show off to the Pope and the Cardinals".

In spite of the lack of credence which George Bois gives to alchemists and their science, he nevertheless recognizes that one cannot suspect the sincerity of the narrator, or the reality of the experiments which he saw being practiced. "He is a witness", he writes, "who combines

all the guarantees that can be expected from an eyewitness, a condition which we cannot find in the same degree among researchers who give accounts of their own agreements and who are always preoccupied by their experiments and who are always preoccupied by their own particular point of view. He is a good witness, but he is a man: he is not infallible. He was perhaps wrong and mistook for gold what was only an alloy of gold and silver. This is what we tend to believe, according to our present ideas and the habit which we owe to our education of classifying transmutation among fables. Yet, if we simply limit ourselves to the weighing of the testimony that we are examining, error is not possible. It is clearly stated that the alchemist melted together as much gold as silver; here then is the alloy well-defined ⁽¹⁸⁾. This alloy is laminated. Then, the laminae are arranged in layers, separated by layers of a certain powder which is not otherwise described. This powder is not the philosophers' stone but it possesses one of its properties: it operates the transmutation. The mixture is heated for 24 hours, and the silver which partly composed the alloy is transformed into gold. This gold is then sold and so on and so forth. There is no mistake possible about the distinction between the metals. It is furthermore unbelievable, since the operation was frequent and the gold sold to merchants, that such an enormous error was produced so easily. For at this time everyone believes in alchemy; goldsmiths, bankers, and merchants know quite well how to distinguish pure gold from gold alloyed with other metals. Since Archimedes, everyone knows how to identify gold by the ratio existing between its volume and its weight. Counterfeiting princes fool their subjects, but they do not fool the scales and balance of bankers, or the art of the assayers. One did not trade in gold by selling for gold what was not gold. We are speaking of a time in 1605 in Tunis which was then one of the best known markets of international trade, and such a fraud would be as difficult and as perilous as it would be today, for example, in London, Amsterdam, New York, or Paris, where heavy gold payments are made in ingots. This is, in our opinion, one of the most demonstrative facts that we have been able to gather to support the opinion of alchemists about the reality of transmutation".

As for the operation itself, it partakes exclusively from archemy and is very close to that taught by Pantheus in his *Voarchadumia*, and whose result he calls gold of the two cementations. For, if Vincent de Paul gave us a broad description of the process, on the other hand, he was careful not to describe the order and the manner of operating. Anyone today who would try to realize it, even if he had a perfect knowledge of this special cement, would only witness its failure. Because gold, in order to acquire the faculty of transmuting the silver alloyed to it, must first be prepared, as the cement only acts on the silver. Without this initial disposition, the gold would remain inert in the midst of the electrum and could not transmit to silver that which it does not possess in a natural state ⁽¹⁹⁾. Spagyrist call this preliminary work exaltation or transfusion and it is also performed with the aid of a cement applied by stratification. Consequently, since the composition of this first cement is different from that of the second, the name given by Pantheus to the metal thus obtained is found to be fully justified.

The secret of exaltation, without whose knowledge one cannot succeed, consists in increasing --- in one burst or gradually --- the normal color of pure gold by the sulphur of an imperfect metal, ordinarily copper. The latter gives precious metal its own blood through a sort of chemical transfusion. The gold, overfilled with the tincture, takes on the red color of coral and can thus give to the specific mercury of silver the sulphur which it lacks, owing to the agency of the mineral spirits emanating from the cement during the work. This transmission of the excess sulphur held by the exalted gold takes place gradually under the effect of heat; it takes form 24 to 40 hours according to the skill of the artisan and the volume of the treated matters. It is necessary to pay much attention to the regulation of the heat, which must be constant and strong enough without ever reaching the point of fusion or melting of the alloy. By

overheating, one would risk volatilizing the silver and dissipating the sulphur introduced into the gold, since this sulphur has not yet reached a perfect fixity.

Finally, a third manipulation, purposely omitted since an enlightened alchemist has no need for so much direction, includes the brushing of the extracted laminae, their fusion and cupellation. Upon being weighed, the pure gold residue will show a more or less perceptible decrease, which varies generally between one-fifth and one-fourth of the alloyed silver. Be that as it may, and in spite of this loss, the process still leaves us with a remunerating profit.

We will point out here, about the process of exaltation, that coralline gold obtained by one or the other of the diverse methods advocated remains capable of transmuting directly, that is, without the help of the later cementation, a certain quantity of the silver: about one-fourth of its weight. Yet, since it is impossible to determine the exact value of the coefficient of auriferous power, one goes around the difficulty by melting the red gold with a triple proportion of silver, (called inquartation) and by submitting the laminated alloy to the beginning operation.

After having said that the exaltation, based in the absorption of a certain portion of the metallic sulphur by the mercury of gold, considerably reinforces the very coloration of the metal, we will give a few indications about the processes used to this end. The processes use the property that solar mercury possesses of strongly retaining a fraction of pure sulphur, when one operates on the metallic mass, so as to dissociate the previously formed alloy. Thus, gold melted with copper, if it comes to be separated from it, never completely abandons a portion of the tincture that it stole from it. So that, by often repeating the same action, gold gradually enriches itself and can then give of its excess tincture to the metal which is closest to it, i.e., silver.

An experienced chemist, points out Naxagoras, knows well enough that if gold is purified up to 24 times or more by the sulphur of antimony, it acquires a remarkable color, brightness, and fineness. There is a loss of metal, contrary to what occurs with copper, because during the purification, the mercury of gold abandons a part of its substance to antimony, and the sulphur becomes overabundant through an imbalance of natural proportions. This renders the process useless and only permits a mere satisfaction of one's curiosity.

The exaltation of gold is also achieved by first melting it with three times its weight in copper, then decomposing the alloy turned into filings by boiling nitric acid. Although this technique is very laborious and costly, in view of the volume of acid required, it is nevertheless one of the best and one of the surest that we know.

However, if one possesses an energetic reducing agent, and if one knows how to use it during the fusion of the gold and copper itself, the operation will be greatly simplified and one does not need fear a loss of material or excessive labor, in spite of the indispensable repetitions which this method still requires. Finally, the artist, by studying these different methods, will be able to discover better and even more efficient ones. For example, he only has to call upon sulphur directly extracted from lead to incinerate it back to a crude state and to project it little by little into molten gold which will keep its pure parts; unless you prefer to use iron, whose specific sulphur is, of all the metals, the one for which gold manifests the greatest affinity.

But this is enough. Let whoever wants to work, work; we care little whether one maintains his opinion, follows or despises our advice. We will repeat one last time that of all the operations benevolently described in these pages, none can be related in any way to traditional alchemy;

none can be compared to its own operations. A thick wall separates the two sciences, an insurmountable obstacle for those who are familiar with the methods and formulas of chemistry. We do not want to make anyone despair, but truth compels us to say that those who keep on performing spagyric research will never come out of the ways of official chemistry. Many modern chemists believe in good faith that they are resolutely going far from chemical science, because they explain its phenomena in a special manner without using any other technique besides that of the learned men whom they criticize. Alas, there have always been many of these erring and self-deluded people, and it perhaps for them that Jacques Tesson ⁽²⁰⁾ wrote these words of truth: "Those who want to accomplish our Work through digestions, through common distillations, and similar sublimations, and others by triturations, all these people are off the good path, in great error and difficulty, and they will never succeed because all these names, words, and manners of operation are names, words, and manners of metaphor".

We believe that we have fulfilled our purpose and demonstrated, as much as it has been possible to do so, that the ancestor of modern chemistry is not the old and simple alchemy but ancient spagyrics, enriched with successive contributions from Greek, Arabic, and medieval archemy.

If one wants to have some idea of the secret science, let him bring his thoughts back to the work of the farmer and that of the microbiologist, since ours is placed under the dependence of analogous conditions. For, as Nature gives the farmer the earth and the grain, and the microbiologist the agar-agar and the spore, similarly she gives the alchemist the proper metallic terrain and the appropriate seed. If all the circumstances favorable to the regular process of this special culture are rigorously observed, the harvest cannot but be abundant...

In summary, alchemical science, of an extreme simplicity in its materials and its formula, nevertheless remains the most unrewarding, the most obscure of all, by reason of the exact knowledge of the required conditions and the required influences. There is its mysterious side, and it is towards resolution of this most difficult problem that the efforts of all the sons of Hermes converge.

(1) Cf. *L'Illusion et les Fausses Sciences (Illusion and the False Sciences)*, by Prof. Edmond-Marie-Leopold Bouty, in the journal *Science et Vie*, December, 1913.

(2) Starting with pure gold trichloride from the chlorauric acid and slowly precipitated by a salt of zinc united to potassium carbonate in a "certain kind of rain water". Rain water alone collected at a given time of the year into a zinc container is sufficient to form the ruby colloid which is separated from the crystalloids by dialysis, as we have many times demonstrated by experiment and always with equal success.

(3) *The Cosmopolite or Nouvelle Lumiere Chymique (New Chemical Light)*, Paris, Jean d'Houry, 1669

(4) Under the general epithet of vulgar chemists, the author designates here archemists and spagyrist to differentiate them from genuine alchemists, also called Adepts (*Adeptus*, who has acquired) or Chemical Philosophers.

(5) Nicholas Grosparmy, *L'Abrege de theorique et le Secret des Secrets (Summary of the Theory and the Secret of Secrets)* manuscripts of the Bibliotheque Nationale, #12246, 12298, 12299, 14789, 19072. Bibliothequ de l'Arsenal, #2516 (166 SAF). Rennes, 160, 161.

(6) Batsdorff, *Le Filet d'Ariadne (Ariadne's Thread)*, Paris, Laurent d'Houry, 1695, p. 2.

(7) *Clavicula Hermetica Scientiae, ad hyperbores quodam horis subsecivis consignata*; Amstelodami, Petrus Mortieri, 1751, p. 51.

(8) It is interesting to note a curious fact, which makes it impossible to use this experiment on an industrial scale. The result indeed varies in inverse ratio to the quantity of the metal used. The larger the masses we operate on, the less product we collect. The same phenomenon can be observed with metallic and saline mixtures from which only small quantities of gold are generally extracted. If the experiment usually succeeds by operating on a few grams of initial matter, by working with a much larger mass, it is frequently a total failure. Before we discovered it, we long searched for the cause of this oddity, which resides in the manner in which solvents behave as they become saturated. The precipitate appears shortly after the beginning and until the middle of the attack; it is redissolved partly or totally later on according to the greater or lesser volume of acid.

(9) Geber, in his *Sum of Perfection of the Magistry*, speaks of the power that spirits have on the bodies, "O sons of the doctrine", he exclaims, "if you want to cause certain changes in bodies, you will only succeed in doing so with spirits (*per spiritus ipsos fieri necesse est*). When these spirits fix themselves in the bodies, they lose their form and their nature; they are not what they once were. When we cause a separation, here is what happens: either these spirits escape by themselves and the bodies where they were fixed remain, or the spirits and the bodies escape together at the same time".

(10) In the mass it colors them red when seen in transparency and green when seen in reflection.

(11) *Les Douze Clefs de Philosophie*, Paris, P. Moet, 1659, vol. 1, p. 34; Editions de Minuit, 1956, p. 85.

(12) J.-A. Pantheus: *Ars et Theoria Transmutationis Metallicae cum Voarchadumia*; Venuent, Vivantium Gautheriorum, 1550.

(13) Dr S. Bacstrom was affiliated with the Hermetic Society founded by the Adept de Chazal, who lived on the island of Mauritius in the Indian Ocean at the time of the French Revolution.

(14) Born in Poux near Dax in 1581, biographers say that he was born in 1576, although he himself gives his exact age, several times, in his correspondence. This error can be explained by the fact that with the complicity of prelates acting against the decision of the Council of Trent, he was fraudulently represented to be 24 years of age, while he really was only 19, when he was ordained priest, in the year 1600.

(15) He founded, says Father Petin (*Dictionnaire hagiographique* in the *Encyclopedie de Migne*, Paris, 1850), a hospital for galley slaves in Marseilles, the houses of Orphelins (orphans) in Paris, of the Filles de la Providence (Daughters of Providence) and of the Filles de la Croix (Daughters of the Cross); the Hospitals of Jesus, of les Enfants-Trouves (Lost Children), the general hospital of the Salpetriere. "Without mentioning the Hospital of Sainte-Renne, which he founded in Burgundy; he came to the rescue of several provinces ravaged by famine and pestilence; and the alms which he sent to Lorraine and Champagne amounted to nearly two millions".

(16) "If I had given him a mountain of gold"...

(17) We do not know why historians and biographers continue to maintain the fanciful spelling of Vincent de Paul. The man has no need of the noble particle to be noble among the nobles. All his letters are signed Depaul. One finds his name written on a Masonic invitation reproduced in the *Dictionnaire d'Occultisme* of E. Desormes and Adriene Basile (Angers, Lachese, 1897). It is not surprising, furthermore, that a lodge obeying the code of charity and high fraternity which ruled the Masonry of the 18th century placed itself under the nominal protection of the powerful philanthropist. The document in question, dated February 14, 1835, emanates from the lodge Salut, Force, union (Salvation, Strength, Union), of the Chapitre des Disciples de Saint-Vincent Depaul, linked to the East of Paris and founded in 1777.

(18) It is all the more unlikely to be mistaken about the nature of this alloy because silver provokes in gold such discoloration that it would not go unnoticed. It is here almost complete, since the metals are alloyed in equal weight and the alloy appears white.

(19) Basil Valentine insists on the necessity of giving to gold an overabundance of sulphur. "Gold does not dye", he says, "if it has not previously been dyed".

(20) Jacques Tesson or Le Tesson, *Le grand et Excellent Oeuvre des Sages*, contenant trois traits ou dialogues: Dialogues du Lyon verd, du grand theriaque et du Regime. Ms. Of the 17th century; Lyon Library, #971, p. 900.

BOOK TWO

THE SALAMANDER OF LISIEUX I

A small town in Normandy, which owes the picturesquely medieval appearance, that we know, to its many wooden houses and overhanging gables, Lisieux, respectful oftimes past, offers us, among so many other curiosities, a pretty and quite interesting alchemist's dwelling.

A humble house, in truth, but which betrays its builder's concern for humility, that the fortunate beneficiaries of the hermetic treasure vowed to abide by throughout their entire life. It is generally known under the name of Manor of the Salamander, and occupies Number 19 of rue Fevres (**Plate IV**)

In spite of our research, obtaining the least information about its first owners has been impossible. No one knows them. No one knows, in Lisieux or anywhere else, who built it in the 16th century, nor who the artists were who decorated it. Probably not to fall short of tradition, the Salamander jealously guards its secret and that of the alchemist. Yet in 1834 the house was the subject of an article ⁽¹⁾, however merely a pure and simple description of the sculpted figures that the tourist can admire on its façade. This notice and a few lines inserted in the *Statistique monumentale du Calvados* by Monsieur de Caumont (Lisieux, vol. 5) represent all the published material relating to the Manor of the Salamander. It is little and we regret it. For the small and delightful residence erected by the will of a true Adept and decorated with motifs borrowed from hermetic symbolism and traditional allegory, deserves better. Well known by the inhabitants of Lisieux, it is not known by the public at large, nor even perhaps by many lovers of art, although its decoration, as much by its abundance and variety, as by its fair preservation allows to place it in the first rank of the best buildings of the style. There is an unfortunate gap and we will try to fill it by emphasizing the artistic value of this elegant dwelling as well as the initiatory teachings expressed by its sculptures.

A study of the motifs of the façade allows us to affirm, with a conviction borne from a patient analysis, that the builder of the Manor was a learned alchemist, having given the measure of his talent, in other words, an Adept, possessor of the philosophers' stone. We also certify that his affiliation with some esoteric center that had many points of contact with the dispersed order of the Templars, proves unquestionable. But what could have been this secret fraternity which prided itself to count among its members the learned philosopher of Lisieux? We must admit our ignorance and leave the question unanswered. However, although we unyieldingly loathe this hypothesis, the probability, the relevance of dates and the proximity of places suggest certain conjunctures, which we will mention as a suggestion, without committing ourselves.

Approximately a century before the Manor of Lisieux had been built, three alchemist companions labored in Flers (Orne) and accomplished the Great Work there in the year 1420. They were Nicolas de Grosparmy, a gentleman, Nicolas or Noel Valois, also called Le Vallois, and a priest by the name of Pierre Vicot or Vitecoq. The latter calls himself "chaplain and domestic servant of the Lord de Grosparmy" ⁽²⁾. Alone, de Grosparmy possessed some wealth along with the title of Lord and Count of Flers. Yet it was Valois who first discovered the practice of the Work and who taught it to his companions, as he gives us to understand in his *Cinq Livres (Five Books)*. He was then 45 years old, subsequently his birthdate must have been 1375. The three Adepts wrote different works between the years 1440-1450 ⁽³⁾. None of



LISIEUX - MANOR OF THE SALAMANDER - 16TH CENTURY
The Man with the Tree Trunk on the Corner Post

these books have been printed. From a note added to the Manuscript #158 (125) of the Library of Rennes, a gentleman of Normandy, Monsieur Bois Jeuffroy, would have inherited all the original treatises by Nicolas de Grosparmy, Valois, and Vicot. He sold the entire copy to the "late Count of Flers for 1500 pounds and a prize horse". This Count of Flers and Baron of Tracy is Louis de Pelleve, who died in 1660 and who was the great-grandson on the women's side of the author Grosparmy ⁽⁴⁾.

However these three Adepts who lived and worked in Flers in the first half of the 15th century, were quoted without the least reason as belonging to the 16th century. In the copy owned by the Library of Rennes, it is nonetheless very clearly stated that they resided in the Castle of Flers, whose owner was Grosparmy, "where they accomplished the philosophers' Work and wrote their books". The original error, conscious or not, comes from an anonym, author of the notes, entitled *Remarques*, written in the margins of a few manuscript copies of the works of Grosparmy, and which belonged to the chemist Chevreul. The latter, without further verifying the whimsical chronology of these notes, mentioned the dates, systematically extended by one century by the anonymous scrivener, and all the authors after him outdid each other in propagating this unforgivable error. We shall briefly reestablish the truth. Alfred de Caix ⁽⁵⁾, after having said that Louis de Pelleve had died in poverty in 1660, adds: "According to the document which precedes, the land of Flers would have been acquired from Nicolas de Grosparmy; but the author of the *Remarques* here contradicts Monsieur de la Ferriere ⁽⁶⁾ who quotes in the date of 1404 a certain Raoul de Grosparmy as Lord of the place". Nothing is truer, although, on the other hand, Alfred de Caix seems to accept the falsified chronology of the unknown annotator. In 1404 Raoul de Grosparmy was indeed Lord of Beuville and of Flers ⁽⁷⁾, and although we do not know how he became its owner, this fact cannot be called into question. "Raoul de Grosparmy", writes Count Hector de La Ferriere, "must be the father of Nicolas de Grosparmy, to whom Marie de Roeux gave three sons --- Jehan de Grosparmy, Guillaume, and Mathurin de Grosparmy, and a daughter, Guillemette de Grosparmy, married on January 8, 1496 to Germain de Grimouville. At that date Nicolas de Grosparmy was dead and Jehan de Grosparmy, Baron of Flers, his eldest son, and Guillaume de Grosparmy, his second son, gave their sister as a consideration for her marriage 300 livres tournois ⁽⁸⁾ in cash, and a yearly pension of 20 pounds which could be bought back for the price of 400 livres tournois" ⁽⁹⁾.

It is here perfectly established: the dates appearing on the copies of the various manuscripts of Grosparmy and Valois are rigorously exact and absolutely authentic. From this point on, we could dispense with searching for the biographical and chronological concordance of Nicolas Valois since it has been proven that he was the companion and the regular guest of the Lord Count of Flers. But it is advisable to discover the origin of the error attributable to the so-poorly informed commentator of the manuscripts of Chevreul. Let us immediately say that it could have arisen from an unfortunate homonymy, unless our anonymous author, by faking all the dates, had wanted to honor Nicolas Valois with the sumptuous Mansion of Caen, which was built by one of his successors.

It is thought that toward the end of his life Nicolas Valois acquired the four lands of Escoville, Fontaines, Mesnil-Guillaume, and Manneville. Nevertheless, this fact is on no way proved; no document confirms it, if not for the unfounded and unreliable assertion of the author of the above-mentioned *Remarks*. The old alchemist, artisan of the wealth of the Le Vallois family and Lords of Escoville, lived as a wise man, in accordance with the precepts of philosophical discipline and ethics. He who wrote, in 1445, for his son that "patience is the ladder of philosophers, and humility the gate to their garden", could not very well follow the example or lead the life of the powerful without failing his convictions. Very likely, at the age of 70,

with no other concerns but his writings, he completed in the Castle of Flers a life of work, calm and simplicity, in the company of his two friends with whom he had accomplished the Great Work. His last years were devoted to the writing of the books destined to perfect the scientific education of his son, known only under the epithet of "the pious and noble knight"⁽¹⁰⁾, and to whom Pierre Vicot was giving oral initiatory instruction. This passage from the manuscript of Valois actually points to the priest Vicot: "In the name of God Almighty, know, my beloved son, the intention of nature by the teachings declared hereafter. When, during the last days of my life, my body, ready to abandon my soul, was doing nothing more than awaiting the hour of the Lord and the last breath, the desire took me to leave you as my Testament and Last Will these words by which you will be taught several beautiful things concerning the subject of the most worthy metallic transmutation... This is why I had the principles of natural Philosophy taught to you, so as to make you more capable of this holy Science"⁽¹¹⁾.

Nicolas Valois' *Cinq Livres*, at the beginning of which this passage is found, bears the date of 1445 --- probably the date of completion --- which would lead us to believe that the alchemist, contrary to the account of the author of the *Remarques*, died at a very advanced age. We can imagine that his son, raised and instructed according to the principles of hermetic wisdom, had to content himself with the acquisition of the lands of Escoville, or with collecting their revenues if he had inherited them from Nicolas Valois. However that may be, and although no written testimony has come to help us in filling this gap, one thing remains certain: the alchemist's son, himself an Adept, never did build this domain, in all or in part; nor did he take any further measures for the ratification of the title attached to it; finally, no one knows whether he lived at Flers like his father or if he dwelled in Caen. We probably owe the building project of the Mansion of the Great Horse, a project realized in the city of Caen by Nicolas Le Vallois, his eldest son, to the first recognized owner of the titles of Esquire and Lord of Escoville, of Mesnil-Guillaume, and of other places. In any case, we know from reliable sources that Jean Le Vallois, first of the name, grandson of Nicolas, "appeared March 24, 1511, wearing the brigandine and a sallet, to show himself to the noblemen of the district of Caen, according to a certificate from the Lieutenant-General of the said district, dated the same day". He left as his heir Nicolas Le Vallois, Lord of Escoville and of Mesmil-Guillaume, born in the year 1494 and married on April 7, 1534 to Marie du Val, who gave him a son, Louis de Vallois, Esquire, Lord of Escoville, born in Caen on September 18, 1536, who later on became counselor-secretary to the king.

So Nicolas Le Vallois, great-grandson of the alchemist of Flers, undertook the work on the house of Escoville, which required approximately ten years, from 1530 to 1540⁽¹²⁾. To this same Nicolas Le Vallois, our anonymous author, perhaps misled by the similarity of names, attributes the work of Nicolas Valois, his ancestor, by transposing in Caen what had happened in Fleers. According to the report of de Bras, (*Les Recherches et antiquitez de la ville de Caen*, p. 132), Nicolas le Vallois is supposed to have died young, in the year 1541. "Friday, Day of Epiphany, 1541", writes the old historian, "Nicolas Le Vallois, Lord of Escoville, Fontaines, Mesnil-Guillaume and Manneville, then the most opulent in the city: while he was about to be seated at his table in a room of the Pavilion of the beautiful and superb dwelling near the St Peter Intersection, which he had built the preceding year, while eating an oyster in the shell, being approximately 47 years of age, all of a sudden fell dead of a stroke which suffocated him".

In the neighborhood, the House of Escoville was called Mansion of the Great Horse⁽¹³⁾. According to Vauquelin des Yveteaux' testimony, Nicolas Le Vallois, its owner, would have accomplished the great Work there, "in the city where the hieroglyphs of the house he had

built and that can still be seen in St Peter's Square facing the great church of the same name, bear witness to his science". Adds Robillard de Beupaire, "There could be hieroglyphs in the sculptures of the Mansion of the Great Horse; then all these seemingly incoherent details could possibly have a very precise meaning for its builder and for all the adepts of the hermetic science, well versed in the mysterious formulae of the ancient philosophers, mages, brahmins, and cabalists". Unfortunately, of all the statues which decorated this elegant dwelling, the principal piece from the alchemical standpoint, 'the one placed above the door which first struck the eyes of passersby and which had given the dwelling its name, the Great Horse, described and celebrated by all contemporary authors, no longer exists today. It was mercilessly broken in 1793. In his work entitled *Les Origines de Caen*, Daniel Huet maintains that the equestrian statue pertained to a scene of the *Book of Revelation* (Chap. 19, v. 2), against Bardou's opinion, the priest of Cormelles, who saw Pegasus in it, and de la Roque's who recognized in it the very effigy of Hercules. In a letter addressed to Daniel Huet by Father de la Ducquerie, the latter writes that "the figure of the great horse which is on the main façade of the house of Monsieur Le Valois d'Escoville's house is not, as Monsieur de la Roque believed, and after his many others, a Hercules; it is a vision of the Apocalypse. This is confirmed by the inscription underneath it. On the thigh of the horseman are written these words from The Apocalypse: *Rex Regum et Dominus Dominantium* --- King of Kings and Lord of Lords". Another correspondent of the learned prelate of Avranches, the physician Dubourg, provides yet more specific details. "In answer to your letter", he wrote, "let me begin by telling you that there are two representations in bas-relief, one on top where this great horse is represented in the air, with clouds beneath its front feet. The man who rides it had a sword in front of him, but it is no longer there; in his right hand he holds a long iron rod; above and in front of him an angel in the sun. Beneath the round part of the door, there is yet another smaller representation of a riding man, on a pile of dead bodies and horses, which birds are eating. It is facing east, as opposed to the other one, and in front of him, are represented the false prophet, the several-headed dragon, and the horsemen against whom this horseman appears to be riding. His head is turned backwards, as if to see the representation of the false prophet and the dragon entering an old castle, out of which flames emerge, and by which this false prophet is already half engulfed. There is writing on the thigh of the great horseman and in several places such as King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and others taken from Chapter 19 of *The Book of Revelation*. As these letters were not engraved, I believe that they were not written so long ago, but there is a marble slab up and above upon which is written: It was his name, the Word of God" ⁽¹⁴⁾.

We did not intend here to undertake the study of the symbolic statues designed to express or expose the principal arcane of the science. This philosopher's dwelling, very well known, often described, can lend itself to the personal interpretations of enthusiasts of the sacred Art. We will simply point out a few particularly instructive figures worthy of interest. There is first the dragon of the mutilated tympanum of the entry door, on the left, under the peristyle which precedes the turret staircase. On the lateral facade, two beautiful statues representing David and Judith must attract our attention; the latter is accompanied by six verses from that period:

Here is seen the portrait
Of the virtuous Judith,
Who by proud deed
Cut off the smoky head
Of Holoernes, that otherwise
Would have defeated blessed Jerusalem.

Above these great figures, two other scenes can be contemplated, one recounting Europa's kidnapping and the other the freeing of Andromeda by Perseus, both with a similar meaning to the legendary kidnapping of Deianira, followed by the death of Nessus, that we shall analyze later when speaking of the myth of Adam and Eve. In another pavilion we can read on the interior frieze of a window, *Marsyas victus obmutescit* ⁽¹⁵⁾. Robillard de Beaupaire says, "It is an allusion to the musical duel between Apollo and Marsyas in which figure as companions the bearers of instruments ⁽¹⁶⁾ that we can see above. Finally, to crown the whole thing, above the small turret, there is a little figure, today very worn, and in which Monsieur Sauvageon several years ago thought to recognize Apollo, god of the day and of light; and below the cupola of the large turret, in a sort of little temple, without columns, is the very recognizable statue of Priapus. We would be at great loss", adds the author, "if we had to explain what precise meaning should be attributed to the character with the grave, severe physiognomy, wearing a Hebrew turban; and to the one who emerges so vigorously from a painted bull's eye window, while his arm pierces the thickness of the entablature; and to a rather beautiful representation of St Cecile playing the therobo; to the blacksmiths whose hammers, at the bottom of the pilasters, strike a missing anvil; to the very original exterior decorations, and which are the decorations of the service stairs, with the motto, *Labor improbus omnia vincit...* ⁽¹⁷⁾. It would perhaps not have been totally useless, in order to penetrate the meaning of all these sculptures, to inquire about the mental tendencies and the habitual occupations of the one who so lavished them on his dwelling. It is known that the Lord of Escoville was one of the wealthiest men of Normandy; what is less known is that he had always devoted himself with a passionate fervor to the mysterious researches of alchemy".

From this succinct presentation we must above all remember that there existed in Flers, in the 15th century, a nucleus of hermetic philosophers; that they may have formed disciples --- which is confirmed by the science transmitted to the successors of Nicolas Valois, the Lords of Escoville --- and may have created an initiation center; and the city of Caen, being about equally distant from Flers and Lisieux, it would be possible that the unknown Adept, retired in the Manor of the Salamander, had received his first instruction from some master belonging to the occult group of Flers or Caen.

There is in this hypothesis neither material impossibility nor improbability, yet we cannot give it any more value than can be expected from this kind of supposition. And so we beg the reader to receive it as we offer it, that is, with all the desirable circumspection and only as a simple probability.

(1) Cf. de Formeville: *Notice sur une maison du XVIeme siecle a Lisieux (Notice on a 16th Century House in Lisieux)*, drawn and lithographed by Challamel, Paris, Janet et Koeplin; Lisieux, Pigeon, 1834.

(2) Cf. Bibliotheque Nationale ms. 14789 (3032): *La Clef des Secrets de Philosophie (The Key of the Secrets of Philosophy)* by Pierre Vicot, priest; 18th century.

(3) At the end of his *Abrege de Theorie (Theoretical Summary)*, Nicolas de Grosparmy gives the exact date at which he completed this work: "which", he wrote, "I have compiled and caused to be written and was perfected the 29th day of December of the year 1449". Cf. Rennes Library, ms 158 (125), p. III.

(4) Cf. Charles Verel: *Les Alchimistes de Flers (The Alchemists of Flers)*; Alencon, 1889, in the *Bulletin de la Societe Historique et Archeologique de l'Orne (Bulletin of the Historical and Archaeological Society of Orne)*.

(5) Alfred de Caix: *Notice sur quelques alchimistes normands (Notice on Some Norman Alchemists)*; Caen, F. LeBlanc-Hardel, 1868.

(6) Comte Hector de la Ferriere: *Histoire de Flers, ses seigneurs, son industrie (History of Flers, Its Lords, Its Industry)*. Paris, Dumoulin, 1855.

(7) Laroque: *Histoire de la Maison d'Harcourt (History of the Harcourt House)*, vol. II, p. 1148.

(8) Translator's note: *livre tournois* was the currency of the time.

(9) Charterer of Flers Castle.

(10) *Oeuvres Manuscrites de Grosparmy, Valois, and Vicot*. Library of Rennes, ms 160 (124) Folio 90, *Second Book by Master Pierre de Vitecoq, priest*: "To you, noble and valorous knight, I address and entrust in your hands the greatest secret ever perceived by anyone alive..." Folio 139, *Recapitulation de Maitre. Pierre Vicot (Recapitulation of Master Pierre Vicot)*, with a preface addressed to "the Noble and pious knight", son of Nicolas Valois.

(11) *Oeuvres de Grosparmy, Valois et Vicot (Works of Grosparmy, Valois, and Vicot)*, Bibliotheque Nationale (Paris) mss # 12246 (2526), 12298 and 12299 (435), 17th century --- Library of Rennes, ms. 160 (124), folio 139: "There follows a recapitulation of M. Pierre Vicot, priest... on the writings which precede, which he wrote to instruct the son of the Lord Le Vallois in this Science after the death of the said Le Vallois, his father".

(12) Eugene de Robillard de Beaurepaire. *Caen illustre, son histoire, ses monuments (Caen Illustrated, Its History, Its Monuments)*. Caen, F. Leblanc-Hardel, 1896, p. 436.

(13) An inscription, engraved on the beautiful southern façade which forms the far end of the courtyard, bears the date 1535.

(14) This Word of God, which is the *Verbum Dismissum* of Trevisan and the Lost Word of the medieval Freemasons, points to the material secret of the Work, whose revelation constitutes the Gift of God, and about whose nature, common name, or use, all philosophers maintain an impenetrable silence. It is therefore evident that the bas-relief which accompanied the inscription must have been connected with the subject of the sages, and probably also with the manner in which to work it. And so it is that one entered into the Work, just as one enters the house of Escoville through the symbolic gate of the Great Horse.

(15) Marsyas (a satyr, a famous flute player) vanquished remains silent.

(16) One frequently encounters on the dwellings of alchemists, among many other hermetic symbols, musicians or musical instruments. Among the disciples of Hermes, the alchemical science (and we will say why in the course of this book) was named the Art of Music.

(17) "Despised, work triumphs over all".

THE SALAMANDER OF LISIEUX II

We find ourselves here at the entrance, closed long ago, of the pretty manor.

The beauty of the style, the successful choice of motifs, the delicacy of execution, make this little door one of the most delightful specimens of 16th century wood sculpture. This hermetic paradigm, exclusively devoted to the symbolism of the dry way, the only one which authors reserved without providing any explanation about it, is a joy to the artist as well as a treasure to the alchemist (**Plate V**)

In order to make the students more responsive to the particular value of the emblems analyzed, we shall respect the order of the work without allowing ourselves to be guided by considerations of architectural logic or aesthetic nature.

On the tympanum of the door with carved panels, we notice an interesting allegorical group composed of a lion and a lioness facing each other, They are holding in their forepaws a human mask which personifies the sun, encircled by a liana carved into a mirror handle. Lion and lioness, male principle and female virtue, reflect the physical expression of the two natures, of similar form but opposite properties, that the art must choose at the beginning of the practice. From their union, accomplished according to certain secret rules, comes this double nature, mixed matter that the sages have named androgyne, their hermaphrodite, or Mirror of the Art. This substance, at once positive and negative, passive containing its own active agent, is the basis, the foundation of the Great Work. Of these two natures, taken separately, the one which plays the role of the feminine matter is the only one indicated and alchemically named on the corbel bearing the overhand of a second-story beam. The figure of a winged dragon can be seen, its tail curled into a ringlet. The dragon is an image and symbol of the primitive and volatile body, true and unique subject upon which one must first work. The philosophers have given it a multitude of diverse names besides the one under which it is commonly known. This has caused and still causes so much difficulty, so much confusion, to beginners, and especially to those who are little concerned with principles and do not know how far the possibility of nature can be expanded. In spite of the general opinion averring that our subject had never been named, we assert on the contrary that many books name it and that all describe it. However, while it is mentioned by the good authors, it cannot be said that it is underlined or expressly shown; it is often classified among the bodies that have been rejected as improper or alien to the Work. This is a traditional technique used by Adepts to divert the lay people and to hide from them the secret entrance to their garden.

Its traditional name, the stone of the philosophers, is descriptive enough of the body to serve as a useful basis for its identification. It is, indeed, genuinely a stone, for, out of the mine, it shows the external characteristics common to all ores. It is the chaos of the sages, in which the four elements are contained, but in a confused, disorganized manner. It is our old man and the father of metals which owe their origin to it, as it represents the first earthly metallic manifestation. It is our *arsenic*, cadmia, antimony, blende, galena, cinnabar, tutia, tartar, etc. All ores, through the hermetic voice, rendered homage to it with their name. It is still called black dragon covered with scales, venomous serpent, daughter of Saturn, and "the most beloved of its children". This primal substance has seen its evolution interrupted by the interposition of a filthy combustible sulphur, which coats its pure mercury, holds it back, and coagulates it. And, though it is entirely volatile, this primitive mercury, materialized by the drying action of the arsenical sulphur, takes the shape of a solid, black, dense, fibrous, brittle,



LISIEUX - MANOR OF THE SALAMANDER
Main Entrance - 16th Century

crushable mass rendered, by its lack of utility, vile, abject, and despicable in the eyes of man, Yet, in this subject --- poor relative of the metal family --- the enlightened artist finds everything that he needs to begin and perfect his Great Work, since it is present, say the authors, at the beginning, the middle, and the end of the Work. Therefore the Ancients have compared it to the Chaos of Creation, where elements and principles, the darkness and the light, were on and the other confounded, intermixed, and unable to mutually interact. For this reason they symbolically depicted their matter in its first being as the image of the world which contained in itself the materials of our hermetic globe ⁽¹⁾, or microcosm, assembled without order, without form, without rhythm or measure.

Our globe, reflection and mirror of the microcosm, is therefore nothing but a small part of the primordial Chaos, destined by divine will for elementary renewal in the three kingdoms, but which sets of mysterious circumstances have oriented and directed toward the mineral kingdom. Thus given form and specified, subjected to the laws ruling the evolution and the progression of minerals, this chaos, which has become a body, contains in a confused manner the purest seed and the closest substance there is to minerals and metals. The philosopher's matter is therefore of mineral and metallic origin. Hence, one must only seek it in the mineral and metallic root, which, says, Basil Valentine in the book, *The Twelve Keys*, was reserved by the Creator and intended only for the generation of metals. Consequently, anyone who seeks the sacred stone of the philosophers with the hope of encountering this little world in substances alien to the mineral and metallic kingdoms, will never reach his goals. To turn the apprentice away from the path of error the ancient authors teach him to always follow nature. Because nature only acts within its own appropriate species, only develops and perfects itself within itself and by itself, free from any heterogeneous thing occurring to hinder its progress or to oppose the effects of its generating power.

On a post of the frame on the left side of the door that we are studying, a subject in high relief calls and holds our attention. It shows a richly dressed man wearing a sleeved doublet and a mortarboard hat, his chest emblazoned with a shield showing a six-pointed star. This man of means, standing on the cover of an urn with embossed sides, serves to indicate the content of the container, according to the custom of the Middle Ages. It is the substance which during sublimations rises above the water, floating like an oil on its surface; it is Basil Valentine's Hyperion and Vitriol, Ripley's and Jacques Tesson's green lion, in a word, the real unknown of the great problem. This knight of beautiful bearing and heavenly lineage is no stranger to us: several hermetic etchings have acquainted us with him. Salomon Trismosin, in *The Golden Fleece*, shows him standing up, his feet planted on the edges of two water-filled vases, which reveal the origin and the source of this mysterious fountain; water of dual nature and virtue, issued from the milk of the virgin and the blood of Christ; igneous water and aqueous fire, virtue of the two baptism mentioned in the Gospels: "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the strap of whose sandals I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire: Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable" ⁽²⁾. Philosopher Solidonius' manuscript reproduces the same subject in the image of a chalice filled with water, out of which two characters are half-emerging in the center of a rather busy composition summing up the entire work. As for the treatise of Azoth, it is a huge angel --- that of the parable of St John in the *Book of Revelation* --- who treads the earth with one foot and the sea with the other, while raising a burning torch with his right hand and compressing an air-inflated goatskin with the left one, clear images of the quaternary of the primal elements: earth, water, air, fire. The body of this angel, whose two wings replace the head, is covered by the seal of the open book, ornamented by the cabalistic star, and the seven words, emblem of Vitriol: *Visita Interiora Terrae*,

Rectificandoque, Invenies Occultum Lapidem ⁽³⁾. "I then saw", writes St John ⁽⁴⁾, "another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was, as it were, the sun, and his feet were as pillars of fire. He had in his hand a little open book, and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth. And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth; and when he had cried out, seven thunders uttered their voices. And when the seven thunders had resounded their voices, I was about to write; and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me: Keep under seal the words of the seven thunders, and write them not... And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said: Go and take the little open book which is in the hand of the angel who standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. And he said unto me: Take it and eat it; it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey".

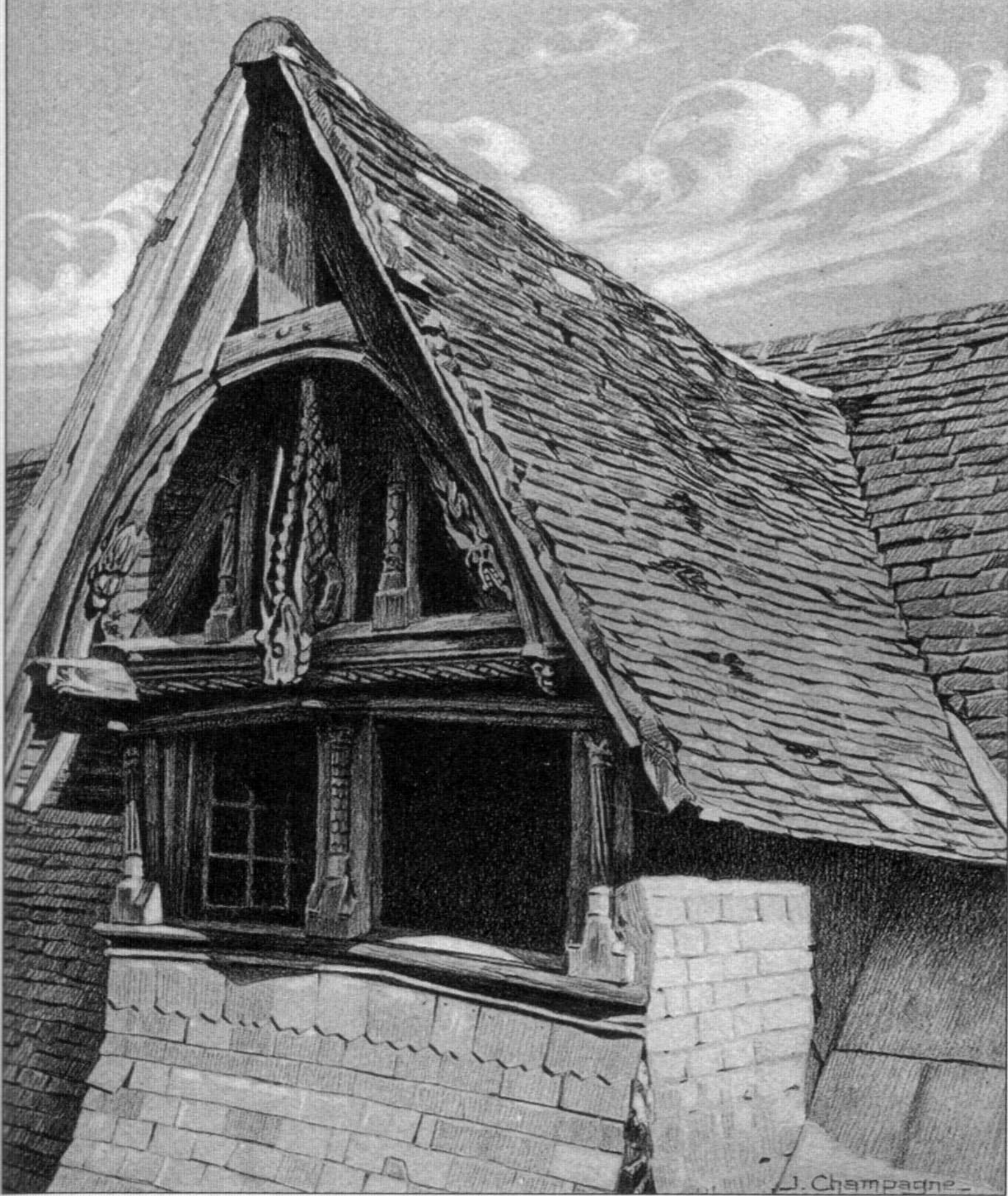
This product, allegorically expressed by an angel or by a man --- the attribute of the evangelist St Matthew --- is none other than the Mercury of the Philosophers, double in nature and quality, partly fixed and material, partly volatile and spiritual, which suffices to begin, achieve and multiply the work. It is the unique and only matter that we need, without having to worry about finding any other; but we must know, so as not to err, that authors generally begin their treatises with this mercury and how to acquire it. This Mercury definitely is the matrix and the root of gold, and not the precious metal which is absolutely useless and without function in the way we are studying. Eirenaeus Philalethes says with much truth, that our Mercury, barely mineral, is even less metallic because it only contains the spirit or metallic seed, while the body tends to move away from the mineral quality. It is nevertheless the spirit of gold, contained in a transparent oil, easily coagulable; the salt of metals, since all stone is salt, and the salt of our stone, since the stone of the philosophers, which is this mercury of which we speak, is the subject of the Philosophers' Stone. Hence several Adepts, intending to create confusion, called it nitre or saltpeter (*sal petri*, salt of stone), and copied the sign of the one onto the image of the other. Further, its crystalline structure, its physical resemblance to melted salt, its transparency, have allowed it to be compared to salts and caused it to be given all their names. According to the will or whim of writers, it has been described in turn as sea salt, rock salt, sal alembroth, *oleu vitri* which Pantheus describes as being chrysocola, and others as borax or *atincar*; Roman vitriol, because [***-123-1] (*Rome*), Greek name of the Eternal City, means *strength, vigor, power, domination*; the mineral of Pierre-Jean Fabre because he says gold lives in it (vitriol) ⁽⁵⁾. It is also called Proteus because of its metamorphoses in the course of the work, and Chameleon ([***-123-2], (*rampant lion*), because it takes on, in sequence, all the colors of the spectrum.

Now here is the last decorative subject of our door. It is a salamander serving as capital to the small twisted column of the right jamb. It appears to be, in a fashion, the protecting corbel of the median pillar, located on the ground floor, and as far as on the attic window. It would even seem, given the deliberate repetition of the symbol, that our alchemist had a marked preference for this heraldic reptile. We do not want to insinuate here that he meant to give it the erotic and vulgar meaning which Francis I valued so much; it would be insulting artisan, dishonoring science, and outraging truth in the manner of this high-bred debauchee with low intellectuality to whom we regret owing the paradoxical name of Renaissance ⁽⁶⁾. However an unusual feature of human disposition prompts man to cherish more that for which he has suffered and toiled most; this reason would probably allow us to explain the triple usage of the salamander, hieroglyph of the secret fire of the sages. It is so indeed, because, among the secondary products entering into the work as helpers or servants, none is more difficult to discover, none is more laborious to identify. It is yet possible, in accessory preparations, to use instead and place of the required additives certain substitutes capable of a similar result; however, in the elaboration of Mercury, nothing could be substituted for the secret fire, this

spirit likely to animate it, exalt it and blend with it after having extracted it out of filthy matter. "I would feel very sorry for you", wrote Limojon de Saint-Didier ⁽⁷⁾, "if, like myself, after having known the true matter, you had spent fifteen years entirely in work, study, and meditation without being able to extract from the stone the precious juice it contains in its midst, for want of knowing the secret fire of the sages, which from this apparently dry and arid plant, causes to flow a water that doesn't wet the hands". Without it, without this fire hidden in a saline form, the prepared matter could not be tested or fulfill its function of mother, and our labor would remain forever chimeric and vain. Every generation requires the help of a specific agent, determined for the realm in which nature has placed it. And everything bears seed. Animals are born from an egg or fertilized ovum; vegetables come from a seed that has been rendered prolific; similarly, minerals and metals have for seed a metallic liquid fertilized by the mineral fire. The latter then is the active agent introduced by the art into the mineral seed and Philalethes tells us, "it is the first to make the axle turn and the wheel move". Hence it is easy to understand to use of this invisible and mysterious metallic light, and the care with which we must seek to know it and to distinguish it by its specific, essential, and occult qualities. Salamander, in Latin *salamandra*, comes from *sal*, salt, and *mandra*, which means stable and also rock hollow, solitude, hermitage. Salamandra then is the name of the salt of the stable, salt of the rock, or solitary slat. In the Greek language this word takes another meaning, revealing the action that provokes: the Greek word [***-125-1] (*Salamandra*) appears formed from [***-125-2] (*Sala*) meaning *agitation, perturbation*, used probably for [***-125-3] (*salos*) or [***-125-4] (*zale*), *agitated water, tempest, fluctuation*, and from [***-125-5] (*mandra*) which has the same meaning as in Latin. From these etymologies we can draw the conclusion that the salt, spirit or fire takes birth in a stable, a rock hollow, a grotto... That is enough. Lying on the straw of his manger in the grotto of Bethlehem, is Jesus not the new sun bringing light to the world? Is he not God himself in his carnal and perishable shell? Who the has said: "I am the Spirit and I am the Life; and I have come to set fire unto things?".

This spiritual fire, given form and materialized in salt, is the hidden sulphur, since during its operation it is never made manifest or perceptible to our eyes. And yet this sulphur, as invisible as it may be, is not an ingenious abstraction or a doctrine stratagem. We know how to isolate it, how to extract it from the body that conceals it, by an occult means and in the appearance of a dry powder which, when it is in that state, becomes improper and without effect for the philosopher's art. This pure fire, of the same essence as the specific sulphur of gold but less digested, is, on the other hand, more abundant than that of the precious metal. This is why it easily unites with the mercury of minerals and imperfect metals. Philalethes affirms that it is found hidden in the belly of Aries, or the Ram, constellation which the sun crosses in the month of April. Finally, to even better designate it, we will add that this Ram, "which hides within itself the magical steel", ostensibly bears on its shield the image of the hermetic seal, the star with six rays. So it is in this very common matter, which may seem merely useful to us, that we must look for the mysterious solar fire, a subtle salt and spiritual sulphur, a celestial light diffused in the darkness of the body, without which nothing can be done and which nothing could replace.

Among the emblematic subjects of the small mansion of Lisieux, we have mentioned earlier the important place occupied by the salamander, specific emblem of its modest and learned owner. We were saying that it can be found as far as the attic window of the roof, almost inaccessible and rising up against the open sky. It embraces the kingpost of the gable between two parallel dragons sculpted on the exposed wooden sides of the gable (**Plate VI**). These two dragons, one apterous ([*126-1], *without wings*), the other chrysopterous ([*126-2], *with golden wings*), are those about which Nicolas Flamel speaks in his Hieroglyphic Figures, and



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The Salamander and the Two Dragons of the Attic Window

which Michael Maier (*Symbola aurea mensae*, Frankfurt, 1617) considers to be, along with the globe surmounted with the cross, specific symbols of the style of the celebrated Adept. This simple declaration demonstrates the wide knowledge that the artist from Lisieux had of philosophical texts and of the symbolism specific to each of his predecessors. On the other hand, the very choice of the salamander leads us to believe that our alchemist must have searched for a long time and spent many years to discover the secret fire. The hieroglyph in fact hides the physicochemical nature of the fruit of the garden of Hesperia, fruit whose late maturity can only rejoice the sage in his old age, at the sunset ([*126-3] (*Hesperis*) of a laborious and painful career. Each piece of fruit is the result of a progressive condensation of the solar fire by the secret fire, a word incarnate, a celestial spirit embodied in all things of this world. And the assembled and concentrated rays of this double fire color and animate a pure, diaphanous, clarified, regenerated body of brilliant brightness and admirable virtue. Once it has reached this point of exaltation, the igneous principle, material and spiritual, by the universality of its action becomes assimilable to bodies contained in the three kingdoms of nature; it is as efficient with animals and plants as it is within mineral and metallic bodies. It is the magical ruby, agent endowed with igneous energy and subtlety and clothed in the color and the multiple properties of fire. Again the Oil of Christ or of crystal, the heraldic lizard, attracts, devours, vomits and feeds the flame, resting on his patience like the old phoenix on his immortality.

(1) Cf. Basil Valentine, *Les Douze Clefs de Philosophie (The Twelve Keys of Philosophy)*, ninth figure.

(2) St Luke 3:16-17; Mark 1:6-8; John 1:32-34

(3) Visit the Interior of the Earth, purify it and you'll find the hidden stone.

(4) *Revelation*, Chapter 10: 1-4,8-9. This very instructive parable is reproduced with several variants specifying its hermetic meaning in the Vision that came to dreaming Ben Adam in the time of the reign of the King of Adama, and brought to light by Floretus in Bethabor. Library of the Arsenal, ms. 3022 (168, S.A.F.), p. 14. Here is the part of the text which is liable to interest us:

"I then heard a voice from the sky speaking to me which said: 'Go and take this open book from the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and the earth'. --- And I went to the angel and told him: 'Give me this book'. --- And I took this small book from the hand of the angel and gave it to him to gulp down; and when he had eaten it, he had furrows in his belly that were so strong that he became all black as coal; and while he was in that blackness, the sun was shining clearly as in bright noon, and then he turned his black form to a kind of white marble, until finally the sun was at its highest and he became totally red like fire. And then everything vanished...

"And from the place where the angel was speaking, a hand came up holding a glass, in which there seemed to be a powder of a reddish-pink color... And I heard a great echo saying: 'Follow nature, follow nature!'"

(5) The French translation of gold lives in it --- *l'or y vit* --- is an anagram of the term vitriol.

(6) "Francis I is called the Father of Letters because of some favors he granted to three or four writers; but one forgets that this Father of Letter issued a royal decree in 1535 by which he prohibited printing under penalty of the gallows; and that after having prohibited printing, he established censoring to prevent the publication and the sale of books previously printed; that he gave the Sorbonne the right of inquisition on consciences; and that after the royal edict, possession of an ancient condemned book prohibited by the Sorbonne endangered its possessors of the death penalty if the book was found in his domicile where the police of Sorbonne were entitled to search; that he showed himself during his entire reign the implacable enemy of the independence of spirit and the progress of enlightenment, as well as the fanatical protector of the most ardent theologians and scholastic absurdities standing against the true spirit of Christian religion. What encouragement for science and for literature! One can only see in Francis I a brilliant madman, who caused the unhappiness and the shame of France". -- Abbot of Montgaillard, *Histoire de France (History of France)*, Paris, Moutardier, 1827, vol. 1, p. 183.

(7) Limojon de Saint-Didier, *Lettre aux vrais Disciples d'Hermes (Letter to the True Disciples of Hermes)* in *Triomphe Hermetique (The Hermetic Triumph)*, Amsterdam, Henry Wetstein, 1699, p. 150.

THE SALAMANDER OF LISIEUX III

On the median pillar of the ground floor the visitor discovers a curious bas-relief. A monkey is carefully eating the fruit of a young apple tree, barely higher than itself (**Plate VII**) . Facing this subject, which or the initiate translates perfect realization, we are looking at the completed Work. The brilliant flowers, whose vivid and glistening colors were the joy of our artisan, have become wilted, and burned out one after the other one; the fruits grew and, from green, which they were at the beginning, they now appear adorned with a brilliant purple envelope, a sure clue to their maturity and excellence.

For, in his patient work, the alchemist must be the scrupulous imitator of nature, the monkey of creation, according to the genuine expression of several masters. Guided by the analogy, he realizes on a small scale with his feeble means and in a restricted domain, what God did on a large scale in the cosmic universe. Here is the immense; there the miniscule. On these two poles, same thought, same effort, a will similar in its relativity. God makes everything from nothing” He creates, Man takes a parcel of that everything from nothing: He creates. Man takes a parcel of that everything and multiplies it; he prolongs and continues. Thus the microcosm amplifies the macrocosm. Such is his goal, his reason to be; such seems to be, in our eyes, his true earthly mission and the cause of his own salvation. Above, God; below, man. Between the immortal Creator and his perishable creature, all of created Nature. Lo: you will find nothing more, and you will discover nothing less than the Author of the first effort connected to the mass of beneficiaries of the divine example, subjected to the mass of beneficiaries of the divine example, subjected to the same imperious will of constant activity, of eternal labor. All classical authors are unanimous in recognizing that the Great Work is an abridgement, reduced to human proportions and possibilities, of the divine Work. Since the Adept must contribute the best of his qualities if he wants to succeed, it appears just and equitable that he should collect the fruit the fruit o the Tree of Life and profit fro the marvelous apples of the garden of the Hesperides.

However, as we are compelled, obeying the desire or the whim of our philosopher, to begin at the very point where art and nature completed their concerted piece of work, would we be acting like blind men if we were to concern ourselves first with knowing what it is that we are looking for? And is not, in spite of the paradox, the method excellent which begins with the end? He who clearly knows what he wants to obtain will more easily find what he needs. In the occult circles of our time, people often speak of the philosophers’ stone without knowing what it is in reality. Many educated people call the hermetic gem a ‘mysterious body’; they share, about it, the opinion of certain spagyrist of the 17th and 18th centuries, who classified it among abstract entities, styled non-beings or rational beings. Let us therefore inquire so as to obtain, about this unknown body, an idea as close as possible to truth: let us study the descriptions, rare and too brief for our liking, that certain philosophers have left us, and let us see what certain learned people and faithful witnesses have reported.

First, let us say that, according to the sacred language, the term philosopher’s stone, means the stone which bears the sign of the sun. The solar sign is characterized by its red coloration, which can vary in intensity, as Basil Valentine ⁽¹⁾ says, “Its color ranges from rosy red to crimson red, or from ruby to pomegranate red; as for its weight, it weighs much more than it has quantity”. So much for color and density. The Cosmopolite ⁽²⁾, whom Louis Figuier believes to be the alchemist known under the name of Seton, and others under the name of Michael Sendivogius, describes in this passage its translucent appearance, its crystalline form,



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The Salamander and the Monkey by the Apple Tree

and its fusibility: “If one were to find”, he said, “our subject in its last state of perfection, made and composed by nature; if it were fusible, like wax or butter, and its redness, its diaphanous nature or clarity appeared on the outside; it would be in truth our blessed stone” Its fusibility is such, indeed, that all authors have compared it to that of wax (64 C); it melts in the flame of a candle”, they repeat; some, for this reason, have even given it in the name of great red wax ⁽³⁾. With these physical characteristics the stone combines some powerful chemical properties --- the power of penetration or ingress, absolute fixity, inability to be oxidized, which makes it incalcinable, and extreme resistance to fire; finally, is irreducibility and its perfect indifference to chemical reagents. We hear the same from Heinrich Khunrath when he writes in his *Ampitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae*, “At last, when the Work will have passed from ashy color to pure white, then to yellow, you will see the philosophers stone, our King raised above the dominators, come out of his glassy sepulcher, arise from his bed and come onto our worldly scene in is glorified body, that is to say, regenerated and more than perfect; in other words, the brilliant carbuncle of a greatly shining splendor, whose parts, very subtle and very purified by the peaceful and harmonious union of the blend are inseparably bound and assembled into one; constant and diaphanous as crystal, compact and ponderous, easily fusible in fire like resin, flowing as wax, and more flowing than quicksilver yet without fumes; piercing and penetrating solid and compact bodies, as oil penetrates paper; soluble and dilatible in any liquid capable of softening it; brittle as glass; taking on a saffron color when it is reduced to powder, yet red as ruby when it remains in one unadulterated mass (this color is the signature of perfect fixation and of fixed perfection); coloring and dyeing constantly; fixed in the tribulations of all experiences, even when tried by devouring sulphur and fiery waters and by the very strong persecution of fire; always durable, incalcinable, and like the Salamander, permanent and justly judging all things (because it is in its own way all in everything), and proclaiming: ‘Behold, I shall renew all things’”. Around 1585, the English, the English adventurer Edward Kelley, surnamed Talbot, had acquired, from an innkeeper, the philosophers’ stone found in the tomb of a bishop who was said to have been very rich; it was red and very heavy, but without any odor. Meanwhile, Berigard of Pisa says that a skillful man gave him a gros (3.82 grams) of a powder whose color was similar to that of the red poppy and which had the odor of calcined sea salt ⁽⁴⁾. Helvetius (Jean-Frederic Schweitzer) saw the stone, sown to him by a foreigner, an Adept, on December 27, 1666, in the form of a metal powder the color of sulphur. This powdered product came, says Khunrath, from a red mass. In a transmutation performed by Seton in July 1602, in front of Dr Jacob Zwinger, the powder used was, according to Dienheim, “rather heavy, and of a color appearing lemon yellow”. A year later, during a second projection at the house of a goldsmith, Hans de Kempen in Cologne, August 11, 1603, the same artist used a red stone.

According to several trustworthy witnesses, this stone, directly obtained in powder form, could take on a color as bright as that of a stone formed in a compact mass. This instance is rather rare, but it can happen and is worth mentioning. In this way, an Italian Adept, who, in 1658, realized the transmutation in front of the Protestant minister, Gros, at the house of a goldsmith (named Bureau) from Geneva, used, according to those who were in attendance, a red powder. Schneider described the stone that Boetticher obtained from Lascaris as a substance having the appearance of a fire-red colored glass. Yet, Lascaris had given Dominico Manuel (Gaetano) a powder similar to vermilion, the color of cinnabar. That of Gustenhover was also very red. As for the sample given by Lascaris to Dierback, it was examined under Counselor Dippel’s microscope and appeared composed of a multitude of small grains or crystals which were red or orange; this stone had a power equal to about 600 times the unit.

Jean-Baptiste Helmont, relating hi experience in 1618 in his laboratory at Vilvorde near Brussels, writes, “I have seen and touched te philosophers’ stone more than once; its color is

like powdered saffron, but heavy and shining like pulverized glass". This product, of which one fourth of a grain (13.25 milligrams) furnished eight ounces of gold (244.72 grams), showed a considerable energy: approximately 18,470 times the unit. In the category of tinctures, i.e., liquids obtained by solutions oily metallic extracts, we have the account of Godwin Herman Braun from Osnabrueck who achieved the transmutation in 1701, using a tincture having the appearance of an oil, "rather fluid and of a brown color". The famous chemist Henckel ⁽⁵⁾, according to Valentini, reports the following anecdote: "One day a stranger, who had a brown tincture with a smell close to hartshorn oil ⁽⁶⁾, came to a famous apothecary of Frankfort-on-Main, named Salwedel; with our drops of this tincture he changed a gros of lead into 7-1/2 grains of gold o 23 carats. This same man gave a few drops of this tincture to the apothecary who lodged him and who then produced identical gold which he saved in memory of that man, with the small bottle in which it was contained and where the marks of the tincture can still be seen. I had this bottle in my hands, and I an testify about it to the world".

Without disputng the truth of the last two statements, we nevertheless refuse to categorize these as transmutations brought about by the philosophers' stone in its special state of powder of projection. All the tinctures meet this criterion. Their subjection to a particular metal, their limited potency, the specific characteristics they exhibit, lead us to regard them as simple metallic products, extracted from common metals by certain procedures called little particulars, which pertain to spagyry rather than to alchemy. Furthermore, these tinctures, being metallic, have no other action but to penetrate the metals which have been used as a basis fr thei penetration. Let us leave aside these processes and tinctures. Above all, it is important to remember that the philosophers' stone appears in the shape of a crystalline, diaphanous body, red in mass, yellow after pulverization, dense and very fusible, although fixed at any temperature, and which its inner qualities render incisive, fiery, penetrating, dense and very fusible, although fixed at any temperature, and which its inner qualities render incisive, fiery, penetrating, irreducible, and incalcinable. In addition, it is soluble in molten glass, but instantaneously volatilizes when it is projected onto molten metal. Here, in one single object, are gathered physiochemical properties which singularly separate it from a possible metallic nature and render its origin rather nebulous. A little reflection will get us out our difficulty. The masters of the art teach us that the goal of their labors is triple. What they seek to realize first is the universal Medicine or the actual philosophers' stone. Obtained in a saline form, whether multiplied or not, it can only be used fr the healing of human illnesses, preservation of health, and growth of plants. Soluble in any alcoholic liquid, its solution takes the name of Aurum Potabile ⁽⁷⁾ (although it does not even contain the least atom of gold because it assumes a magnificent yellow color. Its healing value and the diversity of its use in therapeutics makes it a precious auxiliary in the treatment of grave and incurable ailments. It has no action on metals, except on gold and silver, on which it fixes itself and to which it bestows its own principles, which, consequently, becomes of no use for transmutation. However, if the maximum number of its multiplications is exceeded, it changes form and instead of resuming its solid crystalline state when cooling down, it remains fluid like quicksilver and definitely non-coagulable. It then shines in darkness, with a soft, red, phosphorescent light, of a weaker brightness than that of a common nightlight. The universal Medicine has become the Inextinguishable Light; the light-giving product of those perpetual lamps, which certain authors have mentioned as having been found in some ancient sepulchers. Thus radiant and liquid, the philosophers' stone is not likely, in our opinion, to be pushed further; desiring to amplify its igneous quality would seem dangerous to us; the least that could be feared would be to volatilize it and lose the benefit of a considerable labor. Finally, if we ferment the solid, universal Medicine with very pure gold or silver, through direct fusion, we obtain the Powder of Projection, third form of the Stone. It is a translucent

mass, red or white according to the chosen metal, pulverizable, and appropriate only to metallic transmutation. Oriented, determined, and specific to the mineral realm, it is useless and without action in the other two kingdoms. It becomes clearly evident from the preceding considerations, that the philosophers' stone or universal Medicine, in spite of its undeniable metallic origin, is not uniquely made from metallic matter. If it were otherwise, and if one had to compose it only with metals, it would remain subjected to the conditions ruling mineral nature and it would have no need to be fermented to operate transmutation. Furthermore, the fundamental axiom which teaches that bodies have no action on bodies would be false and paradoxical. Take the time and the trouble to experiment, and you will recognize that metals have no action on other metals. Be they brought to the state of salts or ashes, glasses or colloids, they will always retain their nature throughout trials and, in the process of reduction, they will separate without losing their specific qualities. Only the metallic spirits possess the privilege to alter, modify and denature metallic bodies. They are the true instigators of all the physical metamorphoses that can be observed here. But since these tenuous, extremely subtle and volatile spirits need a vehicle, an envelope capable of holding them back; since this matter must be very pure --- to allow the spirit to remain there --- and very fixed so as to prevent its volatilization; since it must remain fusible in order to promote ingress; since it is essential that it be absolutely resistant to reducing agents, we may easily understand that this matter cannot be searched for in the sole category of metals. That is why Basil Valentine recommends that we take the spirit out of the metallic root and Bernard of Trevisan forbids the use of metals, minerals and their salts in the construction of the body. The reason for it is simple and self-explanatory. If the stone were made up of a metallic body and a spirit fixed in this body, the latter acting on the former as if it were of the same species, the whole would take the characteristic form of metal. We could, in this case, obtain gold or silver or even an unknown metal but nothing more. This is what alchemists have always done, because they did not know the universality and the nature of the agent which they were looking for. But what we ask for, along with all the philosophers, is not the union of a metallic body with a metallic spirit, but rather the condensation, the agglomeration of this spirit into a coherent, tenacious and refractory envelope, capable of coating it, impregnating all its parts and guaranteeing it an efficacious protection. This soul, spirit, or fire assembled, concentrated and coagulated in the purest, the most resistant and the most perfect of earthly matters, we call it our stone. And we can certify that any undertaking which does not have this spirit for guide and this matter for basis will never lead to the proposed objective.

(1) *Les Douze Clefs de Philosophie*, by Frater Basil Valentine, monk of the Order of St Benedict, dealing with the true metallic Medicine.

(2) *Le Cosmopolite ou Nouvelle Lumiere Chymique (The Cosmopolite or New Chemical Light)*, Paris, J. d'Houry, 1669. *Le Traite du Sel (Treatise on Salt)*, p. 64.

(3) In the Latin ms, 5614 of the Bibliotheque National (Paris), which contains treatises by ancient philosophers, the third book is entitled: *Modus Faciendi Optimam Ceram Rubeam*.

(4) By evaporating one liter of seawater, heating the crystals obtained until complete dehydration, and submitting them to calcination in a porcelain capsule, you will clearly perceive the characteristic odor of *iodine*

(5) J.-F. Henckel: *Flora Saturnisans*, Paris, J.-T. Herissant, 1760, ch. 8, p. 158.

(6) It is the characteristic of ammonium carbamate.

(7) Potable gold.

THE SALAMANDER OF LISIEUX IV

On the second floor of the manor of Lisieux, carved in the left pillar of the façade, a man of rather primitive appearance lifts and seems to be trying to remove a tree trunk of rather large dimensions (**Plate IV**).

This symbol, seemingly very obscure, hides nevertheless the most important of the secondary arcane. We shall even affirm that for not being cognizant of this point of doctrine --- and also for having followed too literally the teachings of the old authors --- many good artists were unable to reap the fruit of their labors. And how many investigators, more enthusiastic than penetrating, still collide and stumble today against a stumbling block of specious reasonings! Let us refrain from pushing human reason too far, which is so often contrary to natural simplicity. If we knew how to more innocently observe the effects which nature manifests around us; if we were content to control the results obtained by using the same means; if we subordinated our research to the mystery of causes to facts, and its explanation to what is probable, possible, or hypothetical, many truths would be discovered which are still to be sought. And so beware of introducing, in your observations, that which you think you know, for you would be forced to conclude that it would have been better to learn nothing rather than to have to unlearn everything.

This is perhaps superfluous advice, since putting it into practice demands the application of an unyielding will, of which mediocre are incapable. We know how costly it is to exchange diplomas, seals, and parchments for the humble mantle of the philosopher. At age 24 we had to drain this chalice filled with a bitter beverage. Heart-wounded, ashamed of the errors of our young years, we had to burn the books and the notebooks, we had to confess our ignorance, and as a modest neophyte, decipher another science on the benches of another school, And so, it is for those who had the courage to forget everything that we take the trouble to study the symbol and to strip its esoteric veil.

The tree trunk that this artisan of another age has grasped seems only intent to serve his industrious genius. Yet, it is indeed our dry tree, the same that had the honor of giving its name to one of the oldest streets of Paris, after having appeared for a long time on a very famous street sign. Edouard Fournier ⁽¹⁾ tells us that, according to Sauval (Vol. 1, p. 109), this sign could still be seen around 1660. It indicated to passersby "an inn of which Monstrelet speaks", (Vol. 1, Chap. 177), it was well chosen, for such a dwelling, and from 1300 on, must have served as a lodging for pilgrims returning from the Holy Land. The Dry Tree was a memory of Palestine; it was the tree planted very close to Hebron ⁽²⁾, which, after having been "green and full of leaves" since the beginning of the world, lost its foliage on the day our Lord died on the cross, and dried up; "but to become green again, when a Lord, Prince of the West, will reach the Promised Land with the aid of Christians and will have a mass sung underneath this dry tree".

This dessicated tree, issuing out of arid rock, is pictured in the last plate of *The Art of the Potter* ⁽⁴⁾, but it has been depicted with leaves and fruit, and with a streamer bearing the motto: *Sic in sterili* ⁽⁵⁾. The same one is found sculpted on the beautiful gate of the Cathedral of Limoges, as well as on a quatrefoil of the sub-foundation of Amiens. Two fragments of this same mutilated trunk are raised by a stone clerk above the great shell used as a holy water



LISIEUX - MANOR OF THE SALAMANDER - 16TH CENTURY
The Baphomet - The Combat between the Man and the Griffin

basin in the church of Guimilau (Finistere) in Brittany, Finally, we find the dry tree again on a certain number of secular buildings of the 15th century. In Avignon it surmounts the basket-handle gate of the ancient college of Roure. In Cahors it is used as a frame for two windows (Verdier House on the street of Boulevards), as well as on the small door belonging of the Pellegrin College of the same city (**Plate VIII**)

Such is the hieroglyph adopted by the philosophers to express metallic inertia, that is to say, the special state that human industry gives to reduced and molten metals> Hermetic esoteric demonstrates that metallic bodies remain alive and endowed with vegetative power, as long as they are mineralized in their deposits. There they are combined with the specific agent, or mineral spirit, which ensures their vitality, their nutrition, and their evolution to the term required by nature, when they take on the shape and properties of native silver and gold. Once this goal has been reached, the agent separates from the body, which then ceases to live, becomes fixed and no longer capable of transformation. Were it to stay on earth for several centuries, it still could not, by itself, change state or abandon the characteristics which distinguish metal from mineral aggregate.

However, the process that occurs inside of the metal-bearing deposits is far from simple. Subjected to the vicissitudes of this transitory world, numbers of ores see their evolution suspended by the action of profound causes --- exhaustion of nutritive elements, shortage of crystalline additions, insufficient pressure, heat, etc. --- or external causes --- fissures, surge of waters, opening of the mine. Consequently metals solidify and remain mineralized with the qualities acquired up to then, without being able to go beyond the evolutionary stage they have reached. Others, younger, still await the agent that must ensure their solidity and consistency, they remain in a liquid state and are totally non coagulable. Such is the case of mercury, which is frequently found in its native state, or mineralized by sulphur (cinnabar), either in the ore-bearing earth itself, or outside its place of origin.

In this native form, even though metallurgic treatment did not have to intervene, these metals are as insensitive as those whose ores have undergone roasting and fusion. No more than those ores do the metals possess their own vital agent. The Sages tell us that they are dead, at least in appearance, because it is impossible for us to bring out the latent potential life hidden in the depth of their being under their solid crystallized mass. These are dead trees, although they still conceal a trace of humidity, and they will no longer bear leaves, flowers, fruit, or, above all, seed.

So with good reasoning certain authors assert that gold and mercury cannot help, wholly or partially, in the elaboration of the Work. The first, they say, because its proper agent has been separated from it during its completion, and the second, because the agent has not yet been introduced into it. Other philosophers maintain nevertheless that gold, although sterile in its solid form, may recover its lost vitality and resume its evolution if we know how to "put it back into its first state". But this is an ambiguous teaching which we must guard ourselves from understanding in its common obvious meaning. Let us stop for a moment on this litigious point and not lose sight of the possibility of nature: it is the only means we have to recognize our way in tortuous labyrinth. Most hermeticists believe that, by the term reincrudation, one should understand that which brings back the metal to its primitive state; they take as a basis the meaning of the word itself, which expresses the action of rendering crude or retrograding. This conception is false. It is impossible for nature, and more so for the art, to destroy the effect of the work of centuries. What has been acquired remains acquired. And this is the reason why the old masters assert that it is easier to make gold than to destroy it. No one will ever flatter himself to give back to roasted meat and cooked vegetables the



CAHORS - PELLEGGRI COLLEGE - 15TH CENTURY DOOR
The Dry Tree

appearance and qualities they possessed before they underwent the action of fire. Here again the analogy and the possibility of nature are the best and surest guides. There is no example of regression anywhere in the world.

Other seekers believe that it is enough to bathe the metal in the primitive and mercurial substance which, through slow maturation and progressive coagulation, has given birth to it. This reasoning is more specious than true. Even supposing that they knew this first matter and where to get it --- that which the greatest masters did not know --- they could only obtain, in the final analysis, an increase of the gold they used and not a new body with a power higher to that of the precious metal. The operation, thus understood, boils down to the mixture of one and the same body taken in two different stages of its evolution, one liquid, the other solid. With some thought it is easy to understand that such an enterprise cannot lead us to our aim. Besides, it is in formal opposition to the philosophical axiom we have often stated: bodies have no action on bodies; only spirits are active and acting.

Therefore, by the expression to put gold back into its first matter, we must understand the animation of the metal accomplished by means of the vital agent of which we have spoken. The spirit fled out of the body during its manifestation on the physical plane; it is the metallic soul, or this first matter which we have not wished to designate otherwise and which dwells in the womb of the undefiled Virgin. The animation of gold, symbolically vivifying of the dry tree or resurrection of the dead, is allegorically taught to us by the text of an Arab author. This author, named Kessaesus, who --- Brunet tells us in his notes on *The Gospel of Childhood* --- was very busy collecting oriental legends on the topic of events recounted in the Gospels, relates the circumstances of Mary's delivery in these words: "When the moment of her delivery approached, she departed in the middle of the night from the house of Zachary, and she walked out of Jerusalem. And she saw a dried up palm tree; and when Mary sat at the foot of this tree, it immediately bloomed anew and was covered with leaves and greenery, and it bore a great abundance of fruit through the operation of God's power. And God called forth a spring of living water next to it, and when the pains of childbirth tormented Mary, she squeezed the palm tree tightly with her hands".

We would not know how to say it better or to speak with more clarity.

(1) Edouard Fournier: *Enigmas des rues de Paris (Enigmas of the Streets of Paris)*; Paris, E. Dentu, 1860).

(2) We identify it with the Oak of Member (*Chene de Membre*) or, more hermetically, the dismembered oak (*chene dismembre*).

(3) *Le Livre de Messire Guill. De Mandeville (The Book of Sir Guill. De Mandeville)*; Bibliotheque Nationale, ms 8392, vol. 157.

(4) *Les Trois Livres de l'Art du Potier (The Three Books of the Art of the Potter)*, by Cavalier Cyprian Picolpassi, translated by Claudius Popelyn, Parisian; Paris, International Library, 1861).

(5) The one previously sterile.

THE SALAMANDER OF LISIEUX V

On the central pillar of the second floor, a group, of certain interest to the lovers of the art and the curious about symbolism draws our attention. Although it has suffered much and today exhibits itself mutilated, fissured, and corroded by bad weather, we are nevertheless still capable of discerning its subject. It is a character holding between his legs a griffin whose paws, equipped with claws, are very apparent, as well as the lion's tail extending from its rump, details which alone permit an exact identification. With his left hand the man seizes the monster about the head, and with his right makes a gesture of striking it (**Plate IX**).

We recognize in this motif one of the major emblems of the science, one which covers the preparation of the raw materials of the Work. While the combat between the dragon and the knight signifies the initial encounter, the duel of the mineral products trying to defend their threatened integrity, the griffin marks the result of the operation, veiled moreover by myths variously expressed, but all showing the characteristics of incompatibility, of natural and profound aversion which the substances in contact have for on another.

From the combat that the knight, or secret sulphur, engages with the arsenical sulphur of the old dragon, is born the astral stone, white, heavy, shining as pure silver, and which appears to be signed, bearing the imprint of its nobility, its stamp ⁽¹⁾ esoterically translated as the griffin, a sure indication of the union and peace between fire and water, between air and earth. However, we should not hope to attain this dignity from the first conjunction. For our black stone, covered with rags, is soiled by so many impurities that completely freeing it from them is extremely difficult. For this reason it is important to submit to several levigations (which are Nicolas Flamel's *laveures* or fire purifications), so as to progressively cleanse it from impurities and from heterogeneous and tenacious stains which encumbers it, and to see it take on, with each one of these fire purifications, more splendor, more polish, and more brilliance.

Initiates know that our science, although purely natural and simple, is in no way vulgar; the terms we use, following the masters, are no less so. Please pay attention to them, since we have chosen them with care, with the intention of showing the way, of pointing out the potholes which pit it, thus hoping to enlighten the studious and to divert the blind, the greedy, and the unworthy. Learn, you who already know, that all our purifications are igneous, that all our purifications are made in fire, by fire, and with fire. This is the reason why some authors have described these operations under the chemical title of calcinations, because the matter, long subjected to the action of the flame, yields its impure scorched parts to it. Know also that our rock --- veiled in the form of the dragon --- at first allows a dark, evil-smelling, and poisonous liquid to flow, whose thick volatile smoke is extremely toxic. This water, symbolized by the crow, cannot be washed or whitened except by means of fire. This is what the philosophers gave us to understand when, in their enigmatic style, they recommend that the artist cuts off its head. By these fiery ablutions, the water discharges its black coloration and takes on a white color. The crow, decapitated, gives back its soul and loses its feathers. Thus fire, by its frequent reiterated action on water, forces the latter to better defend its specific qualities by abandoning its superfluties. The water contracts, tightens itself to resist Vulcan's tyrannical influence; it is nourished by fire which aggregates its pure and homogeneous molecules, and finally it is coagulated into a dense corporeal mass, fiery to the extent that the flame remains powerless to further exalt it.

For you, unknown brothers of the mysterious city of the sun, we have formed the resolution of teaching the diverse and successive modes of our purifications. You will be thankful to us, we are certain, to have pointed out to you these reefs of the hermetic sea, against which so many inexperienced Argonauts have been shipwrecked. If you want to possess the griffin --- which is our astral stone --- by tearing it from its arsenical ganque, take two parts of virgin earth, our scaly dragon, and one part of the igneous agent, which is that valiant knight armed with the lance and shield. [*152-1] (*Ares*), more vigorous than Aries, must be in a lesser quantity. Pulverize and add the fifteenth part of this pure, white, admirable salt, washed and crystallized several times, which you must necessarily know. Intimately mix it; and then, following the example of the painful Passion of Our Lord, crucify it with three iron nails, so that the body dies and can then be resurrected. This done, drive away the coarsest sediments from the corpse; crush and triturate the bones; mix the whole thing on a slow heat with a steel rod. Then throw into this mixture half of this second salt, extracted from the dew that fertilizes the earth in the month of May, and you will obtain a body clearer than the preceding one. Repeat the same technique three times; you will reach the matrix of our mercury, and you will have climbed the first rung of the ladder of the sages. When Jesus resurrected the third day after his death, a luminous angel clothed in white alone occupied the empty sepulcher...

However, if it suffices to know the secret substance represented by the dragon in order to discover its antagonist, it is essential to know the means that sages employ in order to limit, to temper the excessive ardor of the belligerents. For want of a necessary mediator --- for which we have never found a symbolic interpretation --- the ignorant experimenter would be exposed to grave dangers. Anxious spectator of the drama which he would have imprudently unleashed, he could neither control its phases nor regulate its fury. Fiery projections, sometimes even brutal explosion of the furnace, would be the sad consequences of his temerity. This is why, aware of our responsibility, we urgently beseech those who do not possess this secret to abstain until then. They will thus avoid the fate of an unfortunate priest of the diocese of Avignon, about which the following notice briefly gives an account ⁽²⁾: "Abbot Chapaty thought to have discovered the philosophers' stone but, unfortunately for him, the crucible burst asunder, the metal exploded against him, attached itself to his face, arms and clothes; he ran in this way along the Infirmary Street, dragging himself in the gutters as though possessed, and he perished miserably burnt, like a damned person. 1706".

When you perceive a noise resembling that of boiling water in the vessel --- a hollow rumbling of the earth, whose entrails fire is tearing out --- be ready to fight and maintain your composure. You will notice smoke and blue, green and violet flames accompanying a series of quick detonations.

Once the effervescence has passed and calm has been restored, you will be able to enjoy a magnificent spectacle. On a sea of fire, solid islands form, float on the surface, moving slowly, taking and leaving an infinity of vivid colors; their surface puffs up, bursts in the center, causing them to resemble tiny volcanoes. Then they disappear, being replaced by pretty green transparent balls revolving quickly, hitting one another, and seeming to chase one another, in the midst of multicolored flames and the iridescent reflection of the incandescent bath.

In describing the difficult and critical preparation of our stone, we have neglected to speak of the effective cooperation which certain external influences must provide. On this topic we are content to quote Nicolas Grosparmy, Adept of the 15th century, of whom we have spoken at the beginning of this study, or Cyliani, philosopher of the 19th century, without omitting Cyprian Piccolpassi, Italian master potter, all of whom devoted a part of their teachings to the

study of these conditions; but their works are not within the grasp of all. Nevertheless, so as to satisfy as far as possible the legitimate curiosity of seekers, we shall say that, without the absolute harmony of the higher with the lower elements, our matter, lacking astral virtues, can be of no use. Before it is put to work, the body on which we operate, is more earthly than heavenly. By helping Nature, art must render it more heavenly than earthly. Knowledge of the propitious moment, times, places, seasons, etc., is therefore essential to us in order to ensure the success of this secret production. Let us predict the hour when the stars will forming the sky of the fixed heavenly bodies, the most favorable aspect. For they will be reflected in this divine mirror which is our stone and they will therein fix their imprint. And the earthly star, occult torch of our nativity, will be the proving mark of the blessed union of heaven and earth, or as Philalethes writes, of "the union of superior virtues in inferior things". You will obtain confirmation of it by discovering, in the midst of the igneous water, or of this earthly heaven, according to the typical expression of Wenceslaus Lavinus of Moravia, the hermetic sun, centric and radiant, made manifest, visible, and obvious.

Catch a ray of sun, condense it into a substantial form, nourish this corporified spiritual fire with elemental fire, and you will possess the greatest treasure of this world.

It is useful to know that the brief but violent fight fought by the knight --- be his name St George, St Michael, or St Marcel in the Christian tradition; Mars, Theseus, Jason, or Hercules in the myths --- only ceases with the death of both champions (hermetically, the eagle and the lion) and their union into a new body whose alchemical signature is the griffin. Let us recall that in all ancient Asian and European legends, the dragon is always appointed guardian of treasures. It watches over the golden apples of the Hesperides and over the hanging fleece of Colchis. Hence it is absolutely necessary to silence this aggressive monster if we want to possess the wealth it protects. A Chinese legend tells us about the learned alchemist Hujumsin, numbered among the gods after his death, that this man, having killed a horrible dragon which ravaged the country, fixed this monster to a column. This is exactly what Jason does in the forest of Aetes, and Cyliani in his allegorical tale of *Hermes Unveiled*. The truth, always unchanged, expresses itself through analogous means and fables.

The combination of the two initial matters, one volatile, the other fixed, produces a third body, fixed, which marks the first stage of the stone of the philosophers. Such is, we have said, the griffin, half eagle, half lion, a symbol which corresponds to the basket of Bacchus and the fish of Christian iconography. Indeed we must point out that the griffin bears, instead of a lion's mane or a necklace of feathers, a crest of fish fins. This detail has its importance. For if it is expedient to provoke the encounter and dominate the fight, one must still discover the means of capturing the pure, essential part of the newly produced body, the only one useful to us; in other words, the philosophical mercury. Poets tell us that Vulcan, catching Mars and Venus at adultery, immediately surrounded them with a net or string so that they could not escape his revenge. Likewise, the masters also advise us to use a fine thread or subtle net to capture the product gradually as it appears. The artist fishes, metaphorically, for the mythical fish, and leaves the water empty, inert, and without soul: Man, in this operation, is then supposed to kill the griffin. This is the scene reproduced by our bas-relief.

If we look for some secret meaning attached to the Greek word [*155-1] (*gryps*), griffin, which has for root [*155-2] (*grypos*), that is to say, "to have a crooked beak", we will find a related word, [*155-3] (*griphos*), whose sound comes much closer to our French word. Furthermore, [*155-4] means both an *enigma* and a *net*. We then see how the fabulous animal contains, in image and in name, the most difficult hermetic enigma to be discovered, that of

the philosophical mercury, whose substance, deeply hidden in the body, is caught like a fish in water with the help of an appropriate net.

Basil Valentine, who is usually clearer, did not use the symbol of the Christian [*155-5] (*Ichtus*)⁽³⁾, which he preferred to humanize under the cabalistic and mythological name of Hyperion. He signifies his knight in this way, presenting the three operations of the Great Work in an enigmatic formula containing three succinct phrases, thus set forth:

"I issued from Hermogenes. Hyperion chose me, Without Jamsuph, I am forced to perish".

We have seen how, and as a result of what reaction, the griffin is born, that comes from Hermogene or from the prime mercurial substance. Hyperion, in Greek [*156-1] (*Hyperion*), is the father of the sun; he releases, out of the second white chaos formed by the art and represented by the griffin, the soul that he holds imprisoned, the spirit, fire, or hidden light, and clears the doorway above the mass in the form of a clear and limpid water: *Spiritus Domini ferebatur super aquas*. For the prepared matter, which contains all the elements needed for our great work, is nothing but a fertilized earth where some confusion still reigns; a substance which holds within itself scattered light, which the art must gather together and isolate by imitating the Creator. We must mortify and decompose this earth, which amounts to killing the griffin and fishing the fish, or separating the fire from the earth, the subtle from the gross, "gently, with great skill and prudence", as Hermes teaches in his Emerald Tablet.

Such is the chemical role of Hyperion. His very name, formed from [*156-1] (*Hyp*) contraction of [*156-2] (*Hyper*), above, and from [*156-3] (*erion*) --- meaning sepulcher, tomb, which has for root [*156-4] (*Hera*), earth, indicates that which rises from the earth, above the sepulcher of matter. We can, if we prefer, choose the etymology according to which [*156-5] (*Hyperion*) would derive from [*156-6], beyond and from [*156-7] (*ion*), violet. The two meanings have between them a perfect hermetic concordance; we only give this variant to enlighten the novices of our order, following in this the word of the Gospel: "Therefore take care how thou listen; for unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath"⁽⁴⁾.

(1) Translator's Note: *Griffe* in French translates as both claw and stamp.

(2) Collection of documents on Avignon; Library of Carpentras, ms. 917, folio 168.

(3) The Greek name for fish is formed by the combination of the initials of this phrase: [*156-8], *Iesous Christos Theous Yios Soter*, Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. The word [*156-9] is frequently seen engraved in Roman catacombs; it also appears on the mosaic of St Apollinaire at Ravenna, placed at the top of a stellate cross, raised on the Latin words SALUS MUNDI (Salvation of the World), and having the letters Alpha and Omega at the extremities of its arms.

(4) Matthew 25:29-30; Luke 8:18 and 19:26; Mark 4:25.

THE SALAMANDER OF LISIEUX VI

Sculpted above the group of the man with the griffin, we notice an enormous grimacing head adorned with a pointed beard. Its cheeks, ears, and forehead are stretched out to the extent that they take on the appearance of flaming expansions. This blazing mask, with an unfriendly grin, seems crowned and provided with horned, ribboned appendices which are resting on a twisted cord in the background of the cornice (**Plate IX**). With its horns and its crown, the solar symbol takes on the meaning of a genuine Baphomet; in other words, of the synthetic image in which Templar Initiates had assembled all the elements of high science and tradition. Truly a complex figure under its apparent simplicity, an eloquent figure, pregnant with teaching in spite of its rude and primitive aesthetic. If we recognize at first the mystic fusion of the natures of the Work, symbolized by the horns of the lunar crescent placed on the solar head, we are no less surprised by the strange expression, reflection of a devouring ardor emanating from the inhuman face, specter of the last judgment. Even the beard, hieroglyph of a luminous and fiery beam projected toward the earth, justifies the exact knowledge of our destiny that the scientist possessed.

Could we possibly be facing the dwelling of some affiliate of the sets of the Illuminati or of the Rosicrucians, descendants of the old Templars? The cyclical theory, concurrent with the doctrine of Hermes, is so clearly exposed here, that except for ignorance or dishonesty we could not suspect the knowledge of our Adept. As for us, our conviction is firm; we are certain not to be mistaken in front of so many categorical assertions: we indeed have before our eyes a baphomet, renewed from the one of the Templars. This image, about which we possess but vague indications or simple hypotheses, never was an idol, as some believed, but rather a complete emblem of the secret traditions of the Order, especially used outwardly as an esoteric paradigm, a seal of chivalry, and a sign of recognition. It was composed of an isosceles triangle, its apex pointed down, hieroglyph for water, first created element, according to Thales of Miletus, who maintained that "God is the Spirit which has formed all things from water" ⁽¹⁾. A second similar triangle, inverted in relationship to the first, but smaller, was inscribed in its center and seemed to occupy the position reserved for the nose on the human face. It symbolized fire and more precisely, fire enclosed in water, or the divine spark, soul incarnate, life infused in matter. On the inverted base of the large triangle of water, there was a graphic sign similar to the Latin letter H or Greek [*158-1] (*eta*), but wider whose central bar was cut with a median circle. This sign in hermetic steganography indicates the universal Spirit, the Creative Spirit, God. Inside the large triangle, slightly above and on each side of the triangle of fire, one could see on the left the lunar circle with an inscribed crescent and on the right the solar circle with a visible center. These small circles were arranged in the manner of eyes. Finally, welded to the base of the small inner triangle, the cross, placed on the globe, thus realized the double hieroglyph of sulphur, active principle, associated to mercury, passive principle and solvent of all metals. A longer or shorter segment often located at the apex of the triangle was carved with lines of a vertical tendency where the layman could recognize not the expression of luminous radiation but a sort of goatee.

Thus presented, the baphomet assumed a gross animal form, imprecise and uneasy to identify. This would probably explain the diversity of descriptions it inspired, where the baphomet is seen as a haloed death head or a bucrane, sometimes the head of the Egyptian Hapi, of a goat, and, even better, the horrifying face of Satan himself! Simple impressions, far removed from reality, but images so unorthodox that they, alas, contributed to spread the accusation of

demonology and sorcery upon the learned Knights Templar and became one of the foundations of their trial, one of the causes of their condemnation.

We have just seen what the baphomet was; now we must try to discover the meaning hidden behind this name.

In the pure hermetic expression corresponding to the labor of the Work, Baphomet comes from the Greek roots [*158-2] (*Bapheus*), dyer, and [*159-1], standing for [*159-2], the moon; unless we want to use [*159-3], [*159-4], in the genitive case, *mother* or *matrix*, which leads to the same lunar meaning, since the moon is truly the mother or the mercurial matrix which receives the tincture or seed of sulphur, representing the male, the dyer --- [*159-5] (*Bapheus*) --- in metallic generation. [*159-6] has the meaning of immersion and of tincture. And it can be said, without revealing too much, that sulphur, father and dyer of the stone, fertilizes the mercurial moon through immersion, which brings us back to the symbolic baptism of Mete, expressed again by the word baphomet ⁽²⁾. It appears as the complete hieroglyph of science, represented elsewhere in the personality of the god Pan, mythical image of nature in full activity.

The Latin word *Bapheus*, dyer, and the verb *meto*, to gather, collect, harvest, also indicate the special quality possessed by mercury or the moon of the sages, of collecting the tincture gradually as it emitted during the immersion or the king's bath, and which the mother keeps in her bosom for the required time. It is the Grail containing the eucharistic wine, liquor of spiritual fire, vegetative liquor, living and vivifying, introduced into material things.

As for the origin of the Order, its lineage, the knowledge and beliefs of the Templars, we could not do better than to literally quote a fragment of the study which Pierre Dujols, the erudite and learned philosopher, devotes to the brother knights in his *Bibliographie Generale des Sciences Occultes* ⁽³⁾.

"The brothers of the Temple", says the author, "--- and we could no longer uphold the opposite view --- were truly affiliated to Manichaeism". Furthermore, Baron de Hammer's thesis conforms to this opinion. For him, the sectarians of Mardeck, the Ismaelians, the Albigensians, the Templars, the Freemasons, the Illuminati, etc., depend on the same secret tradition emanating from this House of Wisdom (*Dar-el-hickmet*) founded by Hakem in Cairo around the 11th century. The German academician Nicolai concludes in the same sense and adds that the famous baphomet, which he derives from the Greek word [*159-7] (*Baphometos*), was a Pythagorean symbol. We will not spend any time with the divergent opinions of Anton, Herder, Munter, etc., but we will dwell for a moment on the etymology of the word baphomet. The idea of Nicolai is acceptable if we admit, with Hammer, this slight variation: [*160-1] (*Baphe Meteos*), which could be translated as "baptism of Mete". Precisely a rite of this name has been established among the Ophites. Mete was an androgynous divinity representing naturing Nature. Proclus says verbatim that Metis, also called [*160-2] (*Erikarpaios*) or Germinating Nature, was the hermaphroditic god of the Snake worshippers. We also know that the Greeks venerated Prudence, designated by the word Metis, as Jupiter's wife. In a word, this philological discussion indisputably confirms that the Baphomet was the pagan expression of Pan. And like the Templars, the Ophites had two baptisms: one, exoteric, the baptism of water, the other esoteric, that of the spirit, or fire. The latter was called the Baptism of Mete. St Justin and St Irenaeus called it illumination. It is the Freemasons' baptism of Light. This purification --- the word is truly appropriate here --- is found on one of the Gnostic idols discovered by Monsieur de Hammer, which he illustrated. It holds in its lap --- mark well the gesture as it is very revealing --- a fire-filled basin. This fact, which should

have struck the learned German and with him all of the symbolists, seems to have revealed nothing to them. And yet it is from this allegory that the famous myth of the Grail takes its origin. Indeed, the erudite baron talks abundantly about this mysterious vessel, whose exact meaning is still being sought. Everyone knows that in the ancient Germanic legend Titurel raises a temple to the Holy Grail at Montsalvat and entrusts its guard to twelve Knights Templar. Monsieur de Hammer would like to recognize in it the symbol of gnostic Wisdom, a very vague conclusion after having burned ⁽⁴⁾ for so long. Forgive us if we dare to suggest another point of view. The Grail --- who doubts it today? --- is the most elevated mystery of mystical Chivalry and of Masonry which degenerated from it; it is the veil of the Fire creator, the *Deus absconditus* ⁽⁵⁾ in the word INRI, engraved above Jesus' head on the cross. When Titurel erected his mystical temple, it was to light the sacred fire of the Vestals, of the Mazadaens, and even of the Hebrews, for the Jews kept a perpetual fire in the temple of Jerusalem. The twelve custodians recall the twelve signs of the Zodiac annually crossed by the sun, a symbol of living fire. The vase of Baron de Hammer's idol is identical with the pyrogenous vase of the Parsees, which is represented full of flames. The Egyptians also possessed this attribute: On the banks of the Nile, Serapis is often represented with the same object on his head, named Gardal. In this Gardal the priests kept the material fire, while the priestesses kept therein the celestial fire of Ptah. For the initiates of Isis, the Gardal was the hieroglyph of divine fire. And this Fire-god, this Love-God eternally incarnates into each being since everything in the universe contains his vital spark. It is the Lamb sacrificed since the beginning of the world, which the Catholic church offers to its faithful in the form of the Eucharist enclosed in the ciborium, like the Sacrament of Love. The ciborium --- *honnei soit qui mal y pense!* ⁽⁶⁾ --- as well as the Grail and the sacred craters of all religions, represents the female reproductive organ and corresponds to the cosmogonic vessel of Plato, the cup of Hermes and Solomon, and the urn of the ancient Mysteries. The Gardal of the Egyptians is therefore the key of the Grail. It is, in short, the same word. Indeed, from distortion to distortion Gardal became Gradal, and then, with a sort of aspiration, Graal. The blood boiling in the holy chalice is the igneous fermentation of life or of the generating mixture. We can only deplore the blindness of those who are so obstinate as to only see in this symbol, stripped of its veils to the point of nudity, a profanation of the divine. The Bread and the Wine of the mystical Sacrifice are the spirit or the fire in matter, which, through their union, produce life. For this reason, all the Christian initiatic handbooks, called Gospels, cause Christ to say allegorically: "I am the Life; I am the living Bread; I have come to set things on fire, and surround him in the sweet exoteric sign of the ideal nourishment".

(1) Cicero: *On the Nature of the Gods*, I, 10, p. 38.

(2) As mentioned, the baphomet sometimes exhibited the outer characteristic and appearance of ox skulls. Presented in this manner, it is identified with the watery nature represented by Neptune, the greatest sea divinity of Olympus. Poseidon is indeed veiled under the icon of the ox, bull, or cow, which are lunar symbols. The Greek name for Neptune come from [*159-6], [*159-7] (*Bous, bos*) in the genitive case, ox, bull, and from [*159-8], [*159-9] (*eydos, eydolon*), image, specter, or simulacrum.

(3) With regard to the *Dictionnaire des Controverses Historiques* by S.-F. Jehan, Paris, 1866.

(4) Translator's Note: reference to a children's game in which one child hides an object and answers the others' questions by "you are cold", if they are far from the object or "you are burning", if they are close to it.

(5) The God hidden...

(6) *Honnei soit qui mal y pense* --- The English device --- Shame unto him who thinks ill of this.

THE SALAMANDER OF LISIEUX VII

Before leaving the lovely manor of the Salamander, we will again point out a few motifs placed on the second floor, which, without being as interesting as the preceding ones, are not lacking symbolical value.

To the right of the pillar bearing the image of the woodcutter, we see two adjacent windows, one blind, and one with glass. At the center of the four-centered arches we can see, on the first, a heraldic *fleur-de-lys*⁽¹⁾, emblem of the sovereignty of science, which later became the attribute of royalty. The sign of Adepthood and of sublime knowledge, by appearing in royal coats of arms when blazonry was instituted, did not lose its elevated meaning and ever since still indicates acquired superiority, preponderance, valor, and dignity. For this reason the chief city of the kingdom received permission to add to the gules field of its coats of arms three fleur-de-lys placed as the head, on an azure field. Moreover the meaning of this symbol is clearly explained in the *Annales* of Nangis: "The kings of France are accustomed to carrying the fleur-de-lys painted three times on their coat of arms as if saying to the world: Faith, Wisdom, and Chivalry are, by the gift and the grace of God, more abundant in our kingdom than in any other. The two leaves of the fleur-de-lys, of same nature, mean wisdom and chivalry guarding faith".

On the second window, a baby head, round and moon-shaped, surmounted by a phallus, cannot but strike out curiosity. We discover it on the very expressive indication of the two principles, whose conjunction engenders the philosophers' matter. This hieroglyph of the agent and the patient, of sulphur and mercury, of sun and moon, the philosophical parents of the stone, is obvious enough for us not to explain it.

Between these windows, the small median column bears instead of a capital, an urn similar to the one we described while studying the motifs of the entrance gate. We do not have to repeat an interpretation we have already given. On the opposite small column, continuing to the right, a little angel, its forehead ribboned, stands hands folded in an attitude of prayer. Farther down, two windows, adjacent as the two preceding ones, bear across their lintel the image of two shields decorated with three flowers, emblem of the three repetitions of each work, about which we have frequently spoken during this analysis> The figures which are the capitals of the three columns of the windows respectively show, from left to right, Number 1: a man's head, which we believe is that of the alchemist himself, whose glance is directed towards the man riding the griffin; Number 2: a small angel, pressing against his breast a quartered shield, that distance and lack of depth prevent us from describing in detail; Number 3: finally, a second angel, showing the open book, the hieroglyph of the matter of the Work, prepared and liable to manifest the spirit it contains. The sages have called their matter *Liber* --- the book -- - because its texture, crystalline and lamellated, is formed of superimposed leaves, like the pages of a book.

Finally, carved in the mass of the last pillar, a kind of Hercules, entirely naked, carries with great difficulty the enormous mass of a solar-inflamed baphomet. Of all the subjects sculpted on the façade, it is the coarsest, the one whose execution is the least successful. Although it dates from the same period, it seems that this little man, stout, malformed, with a swollen belly, with disproportionate genital organs, must have been carved by some unskilled and second-rate artist. With the exception of the face, neuter in its physiognomy, everything seems purposely tormented in this disgraceful caryatid. It is trampling a curved mass

garnished with numerous teeth, as a whale's mouth. Out Hercules might very well represent Jonah, that little prophet miraculously saved after having stayed three days in the belly of a whale. For us, Jonah is the sacred image of the Green Lion of the sages, which remains for three philosophical days locked up in the mother substance before it rises through sublimation and appears on the waters.

(1) We keep the old spelling of the word lys in fleur-de-lys, in order to clearly establish the difference of expression which exists between this heraldic emblem, the draing of which is an iris flower (fleur d'iris), and the natural lilly (fleur de lis) given as an attribute to the Virgin Mary.

THE ALCHEMICAL MYTH OF ADAM AND EVE

The dogma of the first man's fall from grace, says Dupiney, from Vorepierre, does not only belong to Christianity, but also to the mosaic religion and to the primitive religion, which was that of the Patriarchs. For this reason this belief is found, albeit altered and disfigured, among all the peoples of the earth. The authentic story of man's downfall through his sin has been preserved in the first book of Moses (Gen. 2-3). "This fundamental dogma of Christianity", writes Abbot Foucher, "was not unknown in ancient times. People closer to the origin of the world than we, knew through a uniform and constant tradition that the first man had prevaricated, and that his crime had drawn God's curse on all his posterity". "The fall of degenerate man", says Voltaire himself, "is the foundation of the theology of all ancient nations".

According to the Pythagorean Philolaus (5th century BC), ancient philosophers said that the soul was buried in the body as in a tomb, in punishment for some sin. Plato also testified that such was the doctrine of the Orphics, and he himself professed it. But as people also recognized that man had come out of the hands of God and that he had lived in a state of purity and innocence (according to Dicaearchus and Plato), one had to admit that the crime for which he was being punished occurred after his creation. The golden age of Greek and Roman mythologies is evidently a memory of man's first state when coming out of God's hands.

The monuments and traditions of Hinduism confirm the history of Adam and his Fall. This tradition also exists among the Buddhists of Tibet; it was taught by the Druids as well as by the Chinese and the ancient Persians. According to the books of Zoroaster, the first man and the first woman were created pure and submissive to Orzmond, their creator; Ahriman saw them and became jealous of their happiness; he approached them assuming the form of a grass snake, presented them with fruit and persuaded them that he was himself the creator of the entire universe. They believed him, and their nature then became corrupted, and this corruption infected their posterity. The mother of our flesh, or the serpent woman, is famous in Mexican tradition, which represents her, fallen from her primitive state of happiness and innocence. In Yucatan, in Peru, in the Canary Islands, etc., the tradition of the downfall also existed among the natives when the Europeans discovered these countries. The atonements which took place among these diverse peoples to purify the child upon birth were irrefutably witness to the existence of this generalized belief. "Ordinarily", said the learned Cardinal Gousset, "this ceremony took place in the day when the child was given its name". Among the Romans this day was the ninth for boys, and the eighth for girls; it was called *lustricus* because of the lustral water used to purify the newborn. The Egyptians, Persians, and Greeks had a similar custom. In Yucatan, in America, the child was brought to the temple, where a priest poured on its head water reserved for this usage and gave him a name. In the Canary Islands women fulfilled this function instead of priests. Similar atonements were ordered by law among Mexicans. In some provinces a fire was also lit, and a movement was made of passing the child through the flame so as to purify it both by water and by fire. The Tibetans in Asia have similar customs. In India, when an infant is named, after having written his name on his forehead and after having plunged him three times in water, the Brahmin or priest cries out in a loud voice, "O God, pure, unique, invisible, and perfect, we offer you this child, offspring of the holy tribe, anointed with an incorruptible oil, and purified with water".

As Bergier points out, this tradition certainly must go back to the beginning of mankind; for if it had been born among one particular people after the dispersion, it could not have spread from one end of the world to the other. Furthermore, this universal belief in the first man's Fall was accompanied with the expectation of a mediator, an extraordinary individual who was to bring salvation to man and reconcile him with God. Not only was this liberator expected by the Patriarchs and by the Jews, who knew that he would appear among them, but also by the Egyptians, the Chinese, the Japanese, the Hindus, the Siamese, the Arabs, the Persians, and by various nations of America. Among the Greeks and the Romans, this hope was shared by some men, as Plato and Virgil testify. Further, as Voltaire points out, "from time immemorial, there was a maxim among the Indians and the Chinese that the Sage would come from the West. Europe, on the contrary, said that he would come from the East".

Under the biblical tradition of the first man's Fall, the philosophers, with their customary skill, hid a secret of alchemical nature. Clearly we owe to this fact the existence of the representations of Adam and Eve that we discovered on a few old Renaissance dwellings, and it enables us to explain them. One of those, clearly representative of this intention, will serve as an example for our study. This philosopher's dwelling located in Le Mans displays, on the second floor, a bas-relief representing Adam, his arm raised to gather the fruit of the tree of knowledge, while Eve is drawing the branch towards hi, with a rope. Both of them are holding phylacteries, attributes meant to express the fact that the two characters have an occult meaning, different from that of Genesis. This motif, worn badly by weathering --- only the larger masses have been spared --- is circumscribed by a crown of foliage, flowers, and fruit, hieroglyphs of a fecund, fertile nature, of abundance and production. To the right and above we can notice among the leprous foliated moldings the image of the sun, while on the left appears that of the moon. The two hermetic stars come to emphasize and further specify the scientific quality and the secular expression of the subject borrowed from the Holy Scripture (**Plate X**).

Let us notice, in passing, that the secular scenes of the temptation conform themselves to that of religious iconographies. Adam and Eve are always represented, separated by the trunk of the tree of Paradise. In the majority of cases, the snake, coiled around the trunk, is figured with a human head; it appears in this way on the Gothic bas-relief of the ancient Fountain Saint-Maclou, in the church o the same name in Rouen, and on another large tableau decorating a wall of the so-called 'house of Adam and Eve', in Montferrand (Puy-de-Dome), which seems to date back to the end of the 14th or the beginnings of the 15th century. On the stalls of Saint-Bernard-de-Comminges (Haute-Garonne), the reptile uncovers its breasted bust, with a woman's arms and head. The snake of Vitre also exhibits a woman's head, sculpted on the four-centered arch of a lovely 15th century door on rue Notre-Dame (**Plate XI**). On the other hand, the group of the tabernacle of the Cathedral of Valladolid in Spain, made of pure silver remains realistic: the snake is represented in its normal shape and holds an apple in its wide-open mouth, between its fangs ⁽¹⁾.

Adamus, Latin for Adam, means made of red earth; it is the first being of nature, the only one among human creatures who was endowed with the two natures of the androgyne. We can therefore regard him, from the hermetic viewpoint, as the basic matter joined to spirit in the very unity of the created substance, immortal and everlasting. According to the Mosaic tradition, as soon as God gave birth to woman by individualizing, into two distinct and separate bodies, these natures that had been primitively associated in one single body, the first Adam had to withdraw, specifying himself by losing his original constitution and becoming the second Adam, imperfect and mortal. The *Adam princeps* --- the first Adam --- of whom we have never found any figuration anywhere, is called by the Greeks [*172-1] (*Adamos*) or



LISIEUX - MANOR OF THE SALAMANDER - 16TH CENTURY
16th Century Bas-relief



VITRÉ (ILLE-ET-VILAINE)
House Door on rue Notre-Dame (15th Century)

[*172-2] (*Adamas*), a word meaning, on the earthly plane, the hardest of steel, used for [*172-3] (*Adamastos*), that is to say, indomitable, and still virgin [from the roots [*172-4], primitive *not*, and [*172-5] (*damao*), to tame], which characterizes quite well the profound nature of the first heavenly man and of the first earthly body as being solitary and not subject to the yoke of marriage. But what about this steel called [*172-6] (*adamas*) about which the philosophers say so much? Plato, in *Timaeus*, gives us the following explanation.

"Of all the waters which we have called fusible, that which has the most tenuous and the most equal parts, which is the most dense, this unique type with a bright, shining yellow color; the most precious of goods, gold in short, has formed by filtration through stone. The knot of gold having become very hard and black because of its density, is called *adamas*. Another body, close to gold on account of the smallness of its parts but which shows several species, whose density is lower than that of gold, which contains a weak alloy of very tenuous earth, rendering it harder than gold, and which is also lighter, owing to the pores dug in its mass, is one of these brilliant and condensed water called bronze. When the portion of the earth it contains becomes separated through the agency of time, it becomes visible of itself and it is given the name rust".

The text by the great initiate teaches the distinction of the two successive personalities of the symbolic Adam, which are described in their proper mineral expression of steel and bronze. And the body close to the substance named *adamas* --- knot or sulphur of gold --- is the second Adam, considered in the organic kingdom as the true father of all men, and in the mineral kingdom as the agent and procreator of the metallic and geologic individuals constituting it.

Thus we learn that sulphur and mercury, generating principles of metals, were originally one and the same matter; for only later did they acquire their specific individuality and retain it in the compounds proceeding from their union. Although this individuality is maintained by a powerful cohesion, art can nevertheless break it and isolate sulphur and mercury in the form specific to them. Sulphur, the active principle, is symbolically designated by the second Adam, and mercury, the passive element, by his wife Eve. The latter element or mercury, regarded as the most important, is also the most difficult to obtain in the practice of the Work. Its usefulness is such that the science itself owes its name, hence hermetic philosophy is based on the perfect knowledge of Mercury, in Greek [*173-1] (*Hermes*). This is being expressed on the bas-relief which accompanies and borders the panel of Adam and Eve on the house of Le Mans. There we can see Bacchus as a child, holding the thrysus ⁽²⁾, his left hand hiding the opening of a pot, and standing on the lid of a large vase decorated with garlands. Bacchus, emblematic divinity of the mercury of the sages, incarnates a secret meaning similar to that of Eve, mother of the living. In Greece, all Bacchantes ⁽³⁾ were called [*173-2], *Eva*, a word which has for its root [*173-3], *Evius*, a nickname for Bacchus. As for the vessels destined to contain the philosophers' wine or mercury, they are eloquent enough by themselves to spare us the explanation of their esoteric meaning.

This explanation, albeit logical and complying to the doctrine, is nevertheless insufficient to provide the rationale for certain experimental idiosyncrasies and some obscure points of practice. Indubitably the artist could not pretend to acquire the original matter, that is to say, the first Adam, "formed of red earth"; and the subject of the sages itself, qualified "first matter of the art", is quite removed from the inherent simplicity of the second Adam. Nevertheless, this subject is properly the mother of the Work, just as Eve is the mother of men. It is she who endows the bodies which she bears, or more exactly which she reincrudates, with vitality, vegetativeness, and the possibility of mutation. We shall go further and say for those who

already have some smattering of science, that the mother common to all alchemical metals does not enter in substance into the Great Work, although, without her, it is impossible to produce or undertake anything. As a matter of fact, through her intervention, common metals, true and only agents of the stone, are turned into philosophical metals; through her, they are dissolved and purified; in her, they can repossess their lost activity and from having been dead come alive again; she is the earth that nourishes them, makes them grow, fructify, and allows them to multiply; finally, by returning to the motherly womb which had once upon a time formed them and given birth to them, they are reborn, recovering the primitive faculties which human activity had taken away from them. Eve and Bacchus symbolize this philosophical and natural substance --- yet not the first in the sense of unity or universality --- commonly known by the name of Hermes or Mercury. We know, on the other hand, that the winged messenger of the gods was the intermediary between the powers of Mount Olympus, and played in mythology a role analogous to that of mercury in the hermetic work. Hence, we understand more clearly the special nature of its action, and why it does not remain with the bodies which it has diluted, purged, and animated. We can also grasp in which way it is appropriate to understand Basil Valentine when he affirms that metals ⁽⁴⁾ are creatures twice born from mercury, children of the one and only mother, produced and generated by her. Further we can conceive more clearly where the stumbling-block lies which the philosophers have thrown across our paths when they assert in common agreement that mercury is the unique, sole matter of the Work, whereas the necessary reactions are only provoked by it, which they said either by metaphor or by considering it from a specific viewpoint.

It is also useful to learn that, if we need the cist of Cybele, Ceres, or Bacchus, it is because it contains a mysterious body which is the embryo of our stone; if we need a vase, it is to place the body therein, and everyone knows that, without suitable earth, any seed would become useless. Consequently, we cannot do without a vessel, although that which is contained is infinitely more precious than the container, the latter being destined sooner or later to be separated from the former. Water in and of itself has no shape, although it is liable of espousing them all and of taking that of the container which contains it. This is the reason for our vessel and for its necessity and why philosophers have repeatedly recommended it as the indispensable vehicle, the necessary excipient of our bodies. And this truth finds its justification in the image of the infant Bacchus standing on the lid of a hermetic vessel.

Of the preceding, it is especially important to remember that metals, liquefied and dissociated by mercury, recover the vegetative power they possessed at the time of their appearance on the physical plane. The dissolving agent plays for them the part of a genuine Fountain of Youth. It separates the heterogeneous impurities brought in from the mineral deposits, takes away from them the infirmities contracted throughout the centuries; it reanimates them, gives them new vigor and rejuvenates them. It is the way common metals are reincrudated; that is, put back in a state close to their original state, and from then on they are known as living or philosophical metals. Since they reassume, upon contact with their mother, their original faculties, we can assert that they became close to what she is and have taken a nature similar to hers. On the other hand, as a result of this conformity of complexion, they are obviously incapable of engendering new bodies with their mother, the latter having only a renewing rather than a generating power. Hence we must conclude that the mercury of which we speak and which has for symbol the Eve of the Mosaic Eden, is not the one to which the sages have assigned the role of matrix, of receptacle, the vase, suitable for the reincrudated metal, called sulphur, sun of the philosophers, metallic seed and father of the stone.

Do not be mistaken; there lies the Gordian Knot of the Work, the one that beginners must try to untie if they do not want to be stopped short at the beginning of practice. Hence another

mother exists, daughter of the first, whom the masters with an intention easy to guess, have also called mercury. And the differentiation of these two mercuries, one the agent of renewal, the other of procreation, constitutes the most difficult study that the science has reserved for the neophyte. With the aim of helping him overcome this obstacle we have dwelled at length on the myth of Adam and Eve, and we shall attempt to clarify these obscure points, voluntarily left in shadow by even the best of authors. Most of them were content to allegorically describe the union of sulphur and mercury, generators of the stone, which they call sun and moon, philosophical father and mother, fixed and volatile, agent and patient, male and female, eagle and lion, Apollo and Diana (that same transformed into Apollonius of Tyana), Gabritius and Beya, Urim and Thumin, the two columns of the temple: Jachim and Boaz, the old man and the young virgin; finally, and more exactly so, brother and sister, whose respective beings proceeded from a common mother, owing to the opposition of their temperaments, and rather to the difference in age and evolution than to a gap of affinities.

The anonymous author of *The Ancient War of the Knights* ⁽⁵⁾, in a discourse told by the metal reduced to the state of sulphur under the action of first mercury, teaches us that this first sulphur needs a second mercury with which it must be joined so as to multiply its kind.

"Among the artists", the metal says, "who have worked with me, some have pushed their work so far as to succeed in separating from me my spirit, which contains my tincture; so that, mixing it with other metals and minerals, they succeeded in communicating a few of my virtues and strengths to metals that have some affinity and friendship for me. However, the artists who have succeeded in this path and who found with certainty a part of the art are truly in a very small number. Since they did not know whence the tinctures come, it was impossible for them to push their work any further, and in the final analysis they did not find anything very useful in their process. But if these artists had taken their research beyond this point and had seriously examined who is the proper wife for me, and if they had looked for her and united me with her, then I could have tinted a thousand times more". In *The Conversation between Eudoxus and Pyrophile*, which serves as a commentary to this treatise, Limojon Saint-Didier writes about this passage: "The woman who is appropriate for the stone and who must be united to it is the fountain of living water, whose source, entirely heavenly, and particularly which has its center in the sun and the moon, produces this clear and precious stream of the Sages, which flows into the sea of philosophers that surrounds the whole world. It is not without foundation that this divine fountain is called by the author the wife of the stone: some have represented it in the form of a celestial nymph; others gave it the name of the chaste Diana, whose purity and virginity were not soiled by the spiritual connection uniting her to the stone. In a word, this magnetic conjunction is the magical marriage of earth with heaven, about which some philosophers have spoken; so that the second source of the physical tincture which operates such wonders takes its birth from this all mysterious marital union".

The two mothers or mercuries we had just distinguished are represented in the shape of two roosters ⁽⁶⁾ in the stone panel located on the third floor of the house of Le Mans (**Plate XII**). They accompany a vase ⁽⁷⁾ filled with leaves and fruit, symbol of their vivifying, generative and vegetative capacity, of the fecundity and abundance of the productions issued therefrom. On each side of the motif, seated characters --- one blowing into a horn, one plucking a kind of guitar --- perform a musical duo. The various subjects sculpted on the facade refer to a translation of the Art of Music, conventional epithet for alchemy.

Before we continue our study of the motifs of the house of Adam and Eve, we believe that we must warn the reader that under barely veiled terms our analysis contains the revelation of



LE MANS - HOUSE OF ADAM AND EVE (16TH CENTURY)
Deianira's Kidnapping

what it is customary to call the secret of the two mercuries. Our explanation, nevertheless, could not resist an examination, and whosoever will take the trouble to dissect it will find in it certain contradictions, obvious errors of logic or judgment. Yet we loyally acknowledge that at the foundation, there is only one basic mercury, and that the second one necessarily derives from the first. It was appropriate nevertheless to call attention to the different qualities they took on, and to show --- be it at the cost of the twisting of reason or an improbability --- how they can be distinguished and identified and how it is possible to directly extract the appropriate wife of sulphur, mother of the stone, from the womb of our primitive mother. Between cabalistic tale, traditional allegory, and silence, we had no choice. Since our aim is to help workers little familiar with parables and metaphors, the use of allegory and the cabala was forbidden to us. Would it have been better for us to act as many of our predecessors did and say nothing? We do not think so. What would be the use of writing if not for those who already know and who do not need such advice? We have therefore preferred to give in clear language a demonstration *ab absurdo*, thanks to which it has become possible to reveal the Arcanum, until now obstinately hidden. Besides, this technique does not belong to us. May the authors --- and they are numerous --- in whose texts similar contradictions are not noticed, throw the first stone at us!

Above the roosters, guardians of the fruitful vase, a larger panel can be seen, unfortunately quite mutilated, whose tableau represents Deianira's kidnapping by the centaur Nessus.

The legend tells us that Hercules, having obtained from Oeneus the hand of Deianira, for having triumphed over the river god Achelous ⁽⁸⁾, our hero, accompanied with his new wife, wanted to cross the river Evenus ⁽⁹⁾. Nessus, who was in the neighborhood, offered to transport Deianira to the other bank. Hercules made the mistake of agreeing to it, and soon found out that the centaur was trying to take his wife away from him. An arrow dipped in the blood of the Hydra and shot with a very sure hand stopped him immediately. Nessus, knowing he was dying, gave to Deianira his tunic tinged in his blood, assuring her that she could use it to bring back her husband if he left her and became attached to other women. Later the credulous wife, having learned that Hercules was looking for Iole ⁽¹⁰⁾, his prize for having triumphed over Eurytus, her father, sent him the blood-stained vestment. But as soon as Hercules put on the tunic, he felt horrible pains, Not being able to withstand so much suffering, he threw himself in the midst of the pyre raised on Mt Oeta ⁽¹¹⁾, which he had lit with his own hands. Deianira, learning that fateful news, killed herself in despair.

The tale refers to the last operations of the Magistery; it is an allegory of the fermentation of the stone by gold, so as to direct the Elixir towards the metallic kingdom and to limit its use to the transmutation of metals.

Nessus represents the philosophers' stone, not yet determined or assigned to any one of the great natural realms, whose color varies from carmine to brilliant scarlet. [*180-1] (*nesos*), in Greek means crimson garment, and the bloody tunic of the centaur --- which "burns bodies more than the fires of hell" --- signifies the perfection of the completed product, matured and full of tincture.

Hercules represents the sulphur of gold whose virtue, refractory to the most incisive agents, cannot be vanquished by anything except the action of the red garment or blood of the stone. Gold, charred under the combined action of the fire and the tincture, takes on the color of the stone and in exchange, gives it the metallic quality which the work had caused it to lose. Juno, queen of the Work, thus consecrates the glory and reputation of Hercules, whose mythical apotheosis finds its material realization in fermentation. The very same Hercules, [*181-1]

(*Heracles*), indicates that he owes to Juno the imposition of the successive works he undertook, and assured his fame and spread his renown; [*181-1], as a matter of fact, is formed, from the roots [*181-2] (*Hera*), Juno and [*181-3] (*kleos*), meaning glory, reputation, and renown. Deianira, wife of Hercules, personifies the mercurial principle of gold, which fights together with sulphur to which it is joined but which nevertheless succumbs under the ardor of the igneous tunic. In Greek, [*181-4] (*Deianeira*) derives from [*181-5] (*Deiotes*), hostility, fight, agony.

On the face of the two inside pillars which form a border for the mythological scene whose esotericism we have just studied, appear, on one side, a lion's head with wings and on the other, a dog's or a bitch's head. These animals are also integrally represented on the arches of the door of Vitre. The lion, hieroglyph of the fixed and coagulating principle, commonly called sulphur, has wings so as to show that the primitive dissolving agent, by decomposing and reincrudating the metal, gives to sulphur a volatile quality without which its reunion with mercury would become impossible. Some authors have described how to achieve this important operation in their allegory of the fight of the eagle and the lion, of the volatile and the fixed a fight which has been sufficiently explained elsewhere ⁽¹²⁾.

As for the symbolic dog, direct successor of the Egyptian cynocephalus, the philosopher Artephius has granted it civil rights among the figures of alchemical iconography. Indeed, he speaks of the dog of Khorassan and of the Bitch of Armenia, emblems of the sulphur and the mercury, parents of the stone ⁽¹³⁾. But while the word [*181-6] (*Armenos*), meaning that which is needed, which is prepared and appropriately disposed indicates the passive and feminine principle, the Dog of Khorassan, or sulphur, gets its name from the Greek: [*181-7] (*Korax*), equivalent of crow ⁽¹⁴⁾.

The word crow was also used to indicate a certain blackish fish about which, if we were free to do so, we could say many intriguing things.

The Sons of Science whose perseverance has led to the threshold of the sanctuary, are aware that next to the knowledge of the universal dissolving agent --- unique mother taking on Eve's personality --- there is no other more important knowledge than that of metallic sulphur, first son of Adam, effective generator of the stone, which received the name of Cain. Cain means acquisition and the artist first acquires the black and enraged dog mentioned in the texts, the crow, first testimony of the Magistery. It is also, according to the version of the Cosmopolite, the fish without bones, echeueis, or remora, "which swims in our philosophical sea", and about which Jean Joachim d'Estinguel d'Ingrofort ⁽¹⁵⁾ affirms that "once you possess the small fish named Remora, which is very rare if not unique in this great sea, you will no longer need to fish but only to ponder about the preparation, the seasoning, and the cooking of this small fish". Although it is preferable not to extract it from the environment in which it lives --- leaving it, if need be, enough water to maintain its vitality --- those who had the curiosity of isolating it could verify the accuracy, the veracity of the philosophical assertions. It is a very tiny body --- in relation to the volume and the mass from which it comes --- with the external appearance of an often circular, sometimes elliptical, double-convex lens. Of an earthy rather than metallic appearance, this light button, not fusible but very soluble, hard, breakable, friable, black on one side, whitish on the other, violet at its breaking point, has received several names relative to its form, its coloration, or to certain of its chemical idiosyncrasies. It is the secret prototype of the popular bather of the cake of the kings ⁽¹⁶⁾, the charm, [*182-1] (*kymanos*), paronym of [*182-2] (*kyanos*, bluish-black), the sabot or wooden shoe [*182-3] (*bembex*) ⁽¹⁷⁾; it is also the cocoon [*182-4] (*bombykion*) and its worm, whose Greek name, [*182-5] (*bombex*), is so similar to that of sabot, which has for root [*182-6] (*bombos*),

precisely expressing the sound of a spinning top. It is also the small blackish fish called chabot from which Perrault derived his *Chat botte*⁽¹⁸⁾. The famous Marquis of Carabas, from [*183-1] (*Kara*), head and [*183-2] (*basileus*), king, of the hermetic legends dear to our youth and gathered under the title, *Tales of Our Mother Goose*, also has relevance; it is, finally, the basil of the fable --- [*183-3] (*basilikon*) --- our *regulus* (little king) or kinglet ([*183-4] (*basiliskos*), the fur slipper (because it is white and grey) of the humble Cinderella, the sole, the flat fish of which each side is differently colored and whose name is related to sun (Latin *sol, solis*), etc. In the oral tradition of the Adepts, however, this body is usually called by the term violet, the first flower that the sage can see being born and blooming during the springtime of the Work, transforming into a new color the green of its flower bed...

We believe that we must interrupt the teaching here and maintain the wise silence of Nicolas Valois and of Quercetanus, the only ones, our knowledge, who revealed the verbal epithet of sulphur, gold, or hermetic sun.

(1) The sculptor Jaun de Arfe made this magnificent work of art in 1590.

(2) In Greek [*173-3] (*thyrsos*), to which Adepts prefer the synonym [*173-4] (*thyrsologchos*), as being much nearer to scientific truth and experimental reality and in which we can still grasp a very suggestive relationship between the rod of Aaron and the lance of Ares.

(3) Translator's note: Bacchantes, the priestesses of Bacchus.

(4) Here, the Adept hears about alchemical metals produced by reincrudation, or the return of the common metallic bodies to the simple state.

(5) Treatise reprinted in *The Hermetic Triumph* by Limojon de Saint-Didier; Amsterdam, Henry Wetstein, 1699 and Jacques Desbordes, 1710.

(6) In antiquity the rooster was attributed to the god Mercury. The Greeks designated it by the word [*176-1] (*alektor*), which sometimes signifies virgin and sometimes wife, characteristic expressions of both mercuries; cabalistically, *alektor* is a pun on [*176-2], *that which must not or cannot be told, secret, mysterious*.

(7) In Greek, vase is [*179-1] (*aggeion*), the body, word which has for root [*179-2] (*aggos*), uterus.

(8) The water, the humid or mercurial stage which metals originally offer and which they progressively lose as they coagulate under the desiccating action of the sulphur supposed to assimilate mercury. The Greek term [*180-2] (*Acheloos*) does not only apply to the river Achelous but is also used to mean any course of flowing water or river.

(9) [*180-2] (*Euenios*), soft, easy. Remark here that the matter is not a solution of the principles of gold. Hercules does not enter into the waters of the river, and Deianira crosses it on the back of Nessos. It is the solution of the stone that is the topic of this allegorical crossing of the Evenus, and this solution is easily obtained in an easy and soft fashion.

(10) The Greek word [*180-3] (*Ioleia*) is formed from the Greek word [*180-4] (*Ios*), venom and [*180-5] (*leia*), booty or prey. Iole is the hieroglyph of the first matter, violent poison, say the sages, yet with which the great medicine is made. The common metals, dissolved by it, thus fall prey to this venom which changes their nature and decomposes them. This is why the artist must be very careful not to mix the sulphur obtained in this fashion with the metallic gold. Hercules, although looking for Iole, does not enter into union with her.

(11) In Greek [*180-6] (*Aitho*), to burn, inflame, be fiery.

(12) Cf. Fulcanelli, *Le Mystere des Cathedrales (The Mystery of the Cathedrals)*

(13) Among the details of the Creation of the world which ornament the north portal of the Cathedral of Chartres, we can see a 13th century group, representing Adam and Eve, having at their feet the tempter, represented by a monster with a head and torso of a dog, leaning on his front paws and ending in a snake tail. It is the symbol of sulphur, connected with mercury in the original chaotic substance (Satan).

(14) The Latins called the crow *Phoebeius ales*, Bird of Apollo or of the Sun [*181-8] (*phoibos*). In Notre-Dame de Paris, among the chimeras affixed to the balustrades of the high galleries, a strange crow is found clothed with a long veil that half covers it.

(15) Jean-Joachim d'Estinguel d'Ingrofont, *Traitez du Cosmopolite nouvellement decouverts (Newly Discovered Treatises of the Cosmopolite)*, Paris, 1691, Letter II, p. 46.

(16) Translator's Note: This is in reference to the French tradition when on the Day of Epiphany, the 6th of January, day of the Three Wise Men, a cake --- called the cake of the kings, *la galette des rois* --- is baked to remind people of the appearance of the three Magi. A bean figurine is hidden in the cake and the person who finds it is crowned.

(17) See supra, p. 22 in *Le Mystere des Cathedrales*, what has been written about this child's toy, this principal object of *ludus poerorum* (child's play).

(18) Translator's Note: Literally Puss in Boots, but there is hermetic cabala here as *chabot*: the small special fish sounds like Puss 'n Boots in French.

LOUIS D'ESTISSAC I

GOVERNOR OF POITIER AND SAINTONGE

Grand Officer of the Crown and Hermetic Philosopher

The mysterious side of a historical figure is revealed to us through one of his works. As a matter of fact, Louis d'Estissac, man of high birth, turns out to be a practicing alchemist and one of the best instructed Adepts in hermetic secrets.

Where did he obtain his science? Who gave him --- by word of mouth most probably --- the first elements of it? We do not know it for a fact, but we would like to believe that the learned doctor and philosopher Francois Rabelais ⁽¹⁾ could very well have to do with the initiation.

Louis d'Estissac, born in 1507, was the nephew of Geoffrey d'Estissac and lived in the house of his uncle, superior of the Benedictine Abbey of Maillezais, who had established his priory in the vicinity at Liguge (Vienne). It is well known that Geoffrey d'Estissac had for a long time entertained a relationship of the most intense and warm friendship with Rabelais. "In 1525", writes H. Clouzet ⁽²⁾, "our philosopher lived in Liguge as an attaché in the service of Geoffrey d'Estissac". "Jean Bouchet", adds Clouzet, "the procurator-poet who informs us so well about the way of life at Liguge, in the priory of the reverend bishop, unfortunately, does not specify Rabelais' position. Secretary to the prelate? It is possible. But why not governor of his nephew Louis V, who is only 18 years of age and does not marry until 1527? The author of *Gargantua* and of *Pantagruel* brings about such developments in the education of his heroes that we must assume that his scholarship was not purely theoretical but that it was also the fruit of an earlier practice". Moreover, Rabelais seems never to have abandoned his new friend --- perhaps his disciple --- for while in Rome in 1536, he sent, according to Clouzet, to Madame d'Estissac, the young niece of the bishop, "medicinal plants and a thousand cheap little objects of curiosity", imported from Cyprus, Candia, and Constantinople. It is still to the castle of Coulonges-sur-l'Autize --- called Coulonges-les-Royaux in the Fourth Book of *Pantagruel* --- that our philosopher, pursued by the hatred of his enemies, came around 1550 to seek refuge at Louis d'Estissac, heir of Rabelais protector, the bishop of Maillezais.

Be that as it may, this leads us to believe that the search for the philosophers' stone in the 16th and 17th centuries was more active than we tend to believe, and, that its fortunate owners did not represent the tiny majority of the spagyric world that people usually tend to assign it. If they remained unknown to us, it is much less because of a lack of documents relative to their science, than due to our ignorance of traditional symbolism, which does not allow us to recognize them easily. King Francis I, by prohibiting the use of printing through his decree of 1537, probably was the determining cause of this shortage of books, noteworthy in the 16th century, and also was the unconscious promoter of the new symbolic development worthy of the most beautiful medieval period. Stone takes the place of parchment, and sculpted ornamentation comes to the aid of prohibited printing. This temporary return of thought to monuments, of the written allegory to the stone parable, has given us some brilliant works of real interest for the study of the artistic versions of the old alchemy.

As far back as the Middle Ages, the masters whose treatises we possess, were fond of adorning their dwellings with hermetic signs and images. At the time of Jean Astruc ⁽³⁾, physician to King Louis XV, that is to say, around 1720, there was a dwelling in Montpellier,

in rue Cannau opposite the convent of the Capuchin monks, which, according to tradition, is said to have belonged to Master Arnold of Villanova in 1280, or where he might have lived. One could see on it, sculpted on the door, two bas-reliefs representing, one a roaring lion, the other a dragon biting its own tail, acknowledged emblems of the Great Work. The dwelling was destroyed in 1755. His disciple, Raymond Lully, returning from Rome, stopped in Milan in 1296 to pursue his philosophical research. In the same town, in the 18th century, people still showed the house in which Lully had worked; the entrance was decorated with hieroglyphic figures pertaining to the science, as is indicated in a passage in Borrichius' treatise on *The Origin and the Progress of Chemistry* ⁽⁴⁾. It is known that the houses, the churches, and the hospitals built by Nicolas Flamel served as turning points for the distribution of images of the sacred Art; his own dwelling, "l'hostel Flamel", built in the year 1376 on rue Marivaux close to the St Jacques Church in Paris, was, according to a chronicle, "all beautiful with painted and gilded stories and mottoes".

Louis d'Estissac, contemporary of Rabelais, Denis Zachaire, and Jean Lallemand, also wanted to devote to the science which he dearly loved, a dwelling worthy of it. At age 35, he made plans for a symbolic interior where the secret signs which had guided his works would be found, skillfully distributed and hidden with great care. Once the topics were well-established and appropriately veiled --- so that the layman could not discern their mysterious meaning --- once the broad outlines of the architecture were decided upon, he entrusted its execution to an architect who might have been Philibert de l'Orme --- in any case it is Monsieur de Rochebrune's opinion. Thus was born the superb castle of Coulonges-sur-l'Autize (in the district of Deux-Sevres), whose construction demanded 26 years, from 1542 to 1568, which today offers but an empty interior with barren walls. The furniture, the porches, sculpted stones, ceilings, and even quoin turrets have all been scattered. Some of these artworks were acquired by the famous etcher, Etienne-Octave de Guillaume de Rochebrune, and were used for the refurbishing and embellishment of his house in Fontenay-le-Comte, (in the district of Vendee). In the castle of Terre-Neuve, where they are preserved today, we can admire and study them at leisure. This castle, furthermore, by the abundance, the variety, and the origin of the artistic works it contains, is more akin to a museum than to a private dwelling from the time of Henry IV.

The most beautiful ceiling of the castle of Coulonges, which once upon a time ornamented the hall and the treasure room, covers today the great salon of Terre-Neuve, called the Workshop. It is composed of nearly 100 panels, all different; one bears the date of 1550 along with the monogram of Diane de Poitiers, similar to the one found in the Castle of Anet. This detail led people to suggest that the plans of the Castle of Coulognes could have belonged to the architect-priest Philibert de l'Orme ⁽⁵⁾. Later, while studying a similar dwelling, we will come back to the secret meaning of the ancient monogram adopted by the mistress of Henry II, and shall point to the mistake that caused so many magnificent dwellings to be erroneously attributed to Diane de Poitiers.

A mere sharecropper farm at first, the castle of Terre-Neuve, in its current form, was built in 1595 by Jean Morison, on behalf of Count Nicolas Rapin, vice-seneschal of Fontenay-le-Comte and "distinguished poet", as we learn from a handwritten monograph of the castle of Terre-Neuve, probably by Monsieur de Rochebrune's hand. The inscription, in verse, which is under the porch, was composed by Nicolas Rapin himself. We quote it here as an example, keeping its original spelling and form:

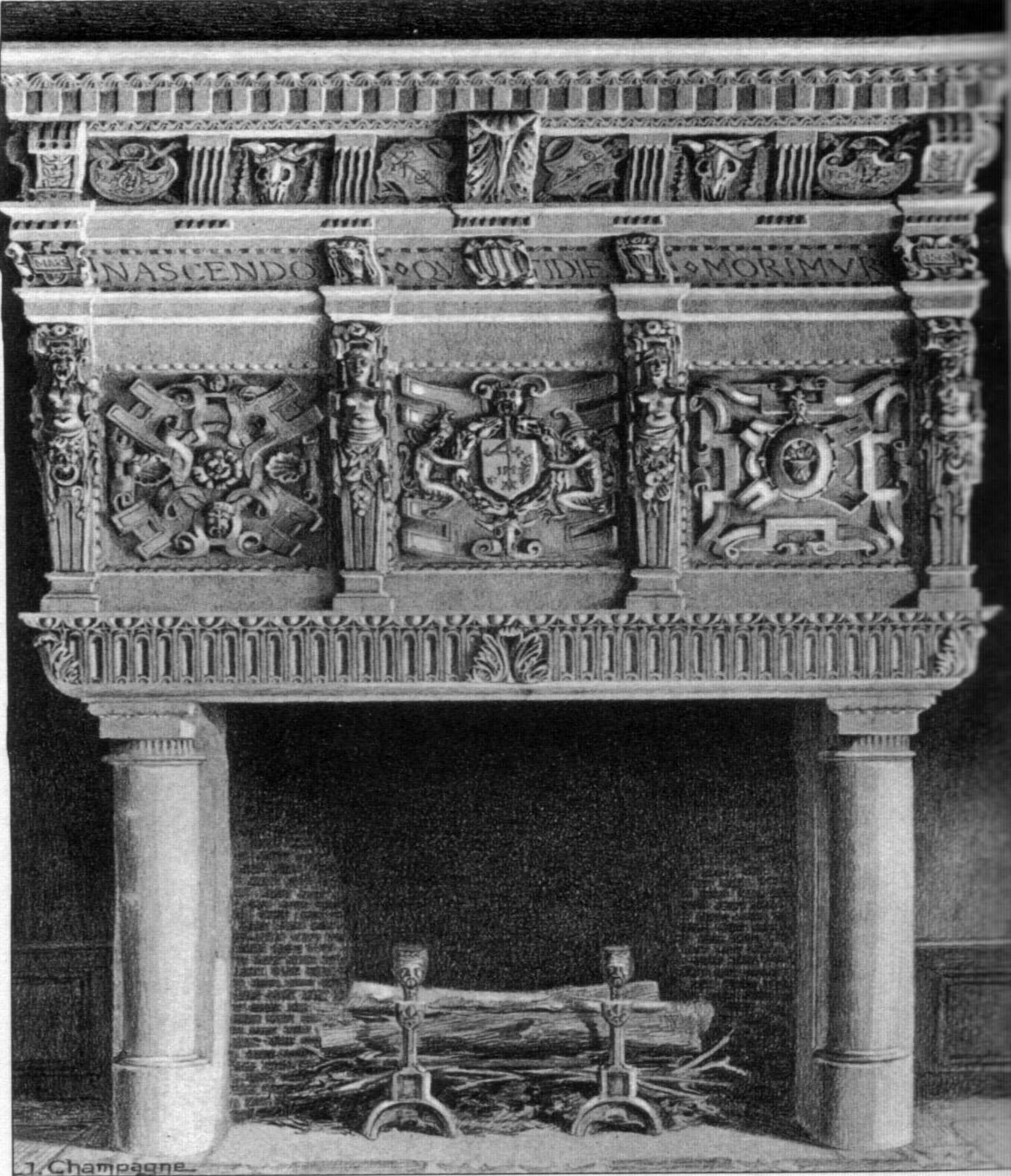
Winds blow in all seasons
A good air into this house
May fever, plague or ills
Coming from envy, quarrels
Or suits never molest
Those who dwell here.

The castle of Terre-Neuve owes its rich collection to the aesthetic sense of the successors of the poet-seneschal and above all to the sure taste of Monsieur de Rochebrune ⁽⁶⁾ for artworks. Our intention is not to draw up a catalog of the curiosities it shelters; let us haphazardly mention, for the pleasure of enthusiasts and amateurs, high-warp tapestries from the time of Louis XIII, coming from Chaligny, near Sainte-Hermine (Vendee); a door from the great salon, originally from Poitiers; the sedan chair of the Lord of Mercy, bishop of Luçon in 1773; gilded wood panels in the style of Louis XIV and Louis XV; a few beautiful wood consoles from the castle of Chambord, an emblazoned panel of Gobelin tapestry (1670) given by Louis XIV; very beautiful 15th century wood sculptures, coming from the library of the Castle of Hermenault, also in the Vendee district; some Henry II curtains; three of the eight panels of a series entitled Triumphs of the Gods, representing the triumphs of Venus, Bellone and Minerva, woven in silk in Flanders and attributed to Mantegna; a piece of Louis XIV furniture, quite well preserved, and a piece of sacristy furniture from the time of Louis XIII; engravings from the best masters of the 16th and 17th centuries; an almost complete collection of all offensive weapons in use from the 9th to the 18th centuries; enameled glazes from Avisseau; Florentine bronzes; Chinese dishes of the green period; a library containing the works of the most famous architects of the 16th and 17th centuries: Ducerceau, Bietterlin, Bullant, Lepautre, Philibert de l'Orme, etc.

Of all these marvels, the one which most interests us is without question the monumental fireplace of the Grand Salon, bought in Coulonges and rebuilt in the Castle of Terre-Neuve in March 1884. More remarkable even, by the accuracy of the hieroglyphs which decorate it, the finishing quality of the workmanship, the mastery, to the extent of virtuosity, of the carving, and its surprising preservation, rather than by its artistic merit, it constitutes for the disciples of Hermes a precious document, very useful to consult (**Plate XIII**).

The art critic would indeed be justified to aim at this stonework the reproach common to decorative productions of the Renaissance, namely, that it tends to be heavy, inharmonious, and cold in spite of its sumptuous appearance, and the display of a far too gaudy luxuriousness. He could pick out the excessive weightiness of the mantle bearing on its meager jambs, the panes poorly balanced among themselves, a poverty of form, of invention, painfully masked under the brilliance of ornaments, moldings, or arabesques lavished in vain ostentation. As for us, we voluntarily leave aside the aesthetic feeling of a brilliant albeit superficial period, where affectations and mannerisms replaced missing thought and failing originality, and we will concentrate on the initiatory value of the symbolism for which this fireplace serves both as pretext and support.

The mantle, structured as an entablature filled with interlacing and symbolic figures, is carried by two cylindrical and polished stone pillars. A fluted lintel is bearing on their abacus under a quarter-round ovum and flanked by three acanthus leaves. Above, four girdled caryatids, two men and two women, hold up the cornice; the women's girdles are ornamented with fruit while those of the men show the mask of a lion biting a crescent moon, by way of a ring. Between the caryatids, three frieze panels unfurl various hieroglyphs in a decorative form designed to better veil them. The cornice is divided horizontally into two levels, by a jutting



FONTENAY-LE-COMTE - TERRE-NEUVE CASTLE
The Fireplace of the Grand Salon

fillet covering four motifs: two vases filled with fire and two shield escutcheons bearing the engraved date of execution, March 1563 ⁽⁷⁾. They serve as a frame for three panels receiving the three words of a Latin sentence: *Nascendo quotidie morumur*. Finally, the upper part displays six little panels, opposed two-by-two, from the extremities toward the center; there we can see small kidney-shaped panels, bucranes, and near the median axis, some hermetic shields.

Such are, briefly described, the most interesting emblematic pieces for the alchemist, that we shall analyze in great detail.

(1) Gilbert Ducher, in one of his epigrams to philosophy (1538), remembers him as one of the faithful of the divine science:

*"In primis sane Raelaesum, principem eundem
Supremeum in studiis diva tuis Sophia".*

(2) H. Clouzot: *Vie de Rabelais (Life of Rabelais)*, biographical notice written for publication of *Les Oeuvres de Rabelais (Works of Rabelais)*, Paris, Garnier Brothers, 1926.

(3) Jean Astruc: *Memoires pour servir a l'Histoire de la Faculte de Medecine de Montpellier (Memoirs to Serve for the History of the Medical School of Montpellier)*; Paris, 1767, p. 153.

(4) "*Quod autem Lullius Mediolani et fuerit et chimica*" etc. (Olaus Borichius, *De Ortu et Progress Chemiae*, p. 133)

(5) On September 5, 1550, Philibert de l'Orme received a canonicate at Notre-Dame de Paris, around the same time as Rabelais. Our architect canceled it in 1559, but his name is frequently mentioned in the capitularies of the cathedral.

(6) Monsieur de Rochebrune, born at Fontenay-le-Comte in 1824 and who died at the Castle of Terre-Neuve in 1900, was the grandfather of the current owner, Monsieur de Fontenious

(7) When Louis d'Estissac was 56 years of age

LOUIS D'ESTISSAC II

The first of the three panels separated by the caryatids, the one on the left, exhibits a central flower, our hermetic rose, two comb-type shells, known as *merelles de Compostelle* ⁽¹⁾, and two human heads, one of a very old man at the bottom, the other of a cherub at the top. We uncover here a formal indication of the materials we need for the Work and the result the artist should expect therefrom. The old man's mask is the emblem of the primary mercurial substance to which, say the philosophers, all metals owe their origin. "You must know", writes Limojon de Saint-Didier ⁽²⁾, "that our old man is our mercury; that the name suits it because it is the raw matter of all metals; the Cosmopolite says it is their water, and gives it the name of steel and magnet, and he adds, to further confirm what I have just uncovered for you: *Si undecies coit aurum cum eo, emittit suum semen, et debilitatur fere ad mortem usque; concipit chalybs, et generat filium patre clariorem*" ⁽³⁾.

On the west portal of the Chartres Cathedral, we admire a very beautiful 12th century statue where the same esotericism is so luminously expressed. It is a tall old man of stone, crowned and haloed --- which already signifies his hermetic personality --- draped in the ample mantle of the philosopher. In his right hand he holds a zither ⁽⁴⁾. In his left hand he raises a bulging phial somewhat like the pilgrims' calabash. Standing between the posts of a throne, he tramples underfoot two intertwined human-headed monsters, one of which has wings and bird feet (**Plate XIV**). These monsters represent the raw bodies whose decomposition and assemblage into another form of volatile quality provides the secret substance we call mercury and that suffices to single-handedly accomplish the entire work. The calabash, which contains the beverage of the peregrinator, is the image of the dissolving qualities of the mercury, cabalistically called pilgrim or traveler. In the motifs of our fireplace, the same is represented by the scallop shells ⁽⁵⁾, also used as, and called holy-water basins, because therein is kept holy or blessed water, qualifications which the ancients applied to mercurial water. Here, in addition to the purely chemical meaning, the two shells, still teach the seeker that the regular and natural proportion demands two parts of the dissolving agent for one of the fixed body. From this operation, accomplished according to the art, arises a new, regenerated body, of a volatile nature, evoked by the cherub or angel ⁽⁶⁾ who dominates the composition. Thus, the death of the old man gives birth to the child, and ensures its vitality. Philalethes advises us that in order to achieve the goal we must kill the living so as to resuscitate the dead. "By taking", he says, "the gold, which is dead, and the water, which is living, we form a compound in which, after a brief decoction, the gold seed becomes alive while the living mercury is killed. The spirit coagulates with the body and the two putrefy forming a silt-like substance, until the constituent parts of the compound are reduced to atoms. Such is the nature of our Magistry" ⁽⁷⁾. This double substance, this perfectly matured, augmented and multiplied compound becomes the agent of the marvelous transformations which characterize the philosophers' stone, *rosa hermetica*. The rose is sometimes white, sometimes red, depending on the ferment, silver or gold, which serves to orient our first stone. Flamel describes for us the two philosophers' flowers, blooming on the same rosebush, Flamel describes for us in his *Book of Hieroglyphic Figures*. They similarly embellish the title page of Mutus Liber, and are seen blooming in a crucible, on the Gobille engraving illustrating the twelfth key of Basil Valentine. It is known that the celestial Virgin wears a crown of white roses and it is also known that the red rose is the signature reserved to the initiates of the higher order, the Rose Cross ⁽⁸⁾. Finally, explaining this term Rose Cross will allow us to complete the description of the first panel.



CHARTRES CATHEDRAL - WEST PORTAL
Symbolic old man (12th Century)

Apart from the alchemical symbolism whose meaning is even quite clear, we unveil in this panel another hidden element, relating to the high rank occupied, in the initiatory hierarchy, by the man to whom we owe the motifs of this hieroglyphic architecture. The fact that Louis d'Estissac had conquered the title par excellence of hermetic nobility is beyond doubt. The central rose in fact appears in the center of the St Andrew cross, formed by the rising of stone bandelettes which we can assume had previously covered and enclosed it. It is the great symbol of manifested light ⁽⁹⁾, which is indicated by the Greek letter X (*khi*), initial of the words [*197-1] (*Chone*), [*197-2] (*Chrysos*), and [*197-3] (*Chronos*), crucible, gold, and time, triple unknown of the Great Work. The cross of St Andrew ([*197-4] --- *Chiasma*), in the shape of an X, is the hieroglyph of luminous and divergent radiations, emanated from a unique fire/center, reduced to its simplest expression. Therefore, it is clearly the graphic of the spark. Its radiation can be multiplied, but it is impossible to further simplify it. These intersecting lines produce the diagram of the shining of stars, of the radiating dispersion of all that shines, lightens and irradiates. Thus it has been made the seal, the mark of illumination, and, in a wider sense, of spiritual revelation. The Holy Spirit is always perpendicular to its body, that is to say, in a cross. For the Greek cross and that of St Andrew have in hermetics an exactly similar meaning. One frequently encounters the image of the dove completed by a halo which specifies the hidden meaning, as can be seen in the religious scenes of our Primitives and in a number of purely alchemical sculptures ⁽¹⁰⁾. The Greek X and the French X represent the writing of light by light itself, the trail of its passage, the manifestation of its movement, the affirmation of its reality. It is its true signature. Until the 12th century, no other mark was used to authenticate old charters; from the 15th century on, the cross became the signature of illiterates. In Rome, auspicious days were signed with a white cross and unfavorable ones with a black cross. It is the complete number of the Work, because unity, the two natures, the three principles, and the four elements give the double quintessence, the two Vs joined in the Roman cipher X for the number ten. The number is the foundation of the Pythagorean Cabala, or of the universal language, whose curious paradigm can be seen on the last page of a little alchemy book ⁽¹¹⁾. Bohemians used the cross or the X as a sign of recognition. Guided by this graphic traced on a tree or on some wall, they still camp exactly on the spot occupied by their predecessors near the sacred symbol which they call *Patria*. One could believe this word to be of Latin origin and apply to the nomads this maxim which the cats --- living objects of art --- strive to practice: *Patria est ubicumque est bene* --- wherever we are comfortable, there is our country; but their emblem refers to a Greek word [*198-1] (*Patria*), with the meaning of family, tribe, race. The cross of the Gypsies or Romanies therefore indicates the place of refuge assigned to a tribe. Furthermore, almost all meanings revealed by the sign X have a transcendent or mysterious value, and this fact is singular. In algebra, X is the unknown quantity; it is also the problem to be solved, the solution to be discovered; it is the Pythagorean sign of multiplication, and the element to cast out the nines in arithmetic; it is the popular symbol of mathematics in what concerns higher or abstract development. It characterizes that which, generally is excellent, useful, remarkable ([*198-2] --- *Chresimos*). In that sense, and in the slang of students, it serves to single out the French Polytechnic School ⁽¹²⁾ by securing the superiority that the "taupins and dear comrades" ⁽¹³⁾ of that school would not permit to be discussed or disputed. The best pupils, candidates to the school, are united in each promotion or "taupe", by a cabalistic formula composed of an X whose opposite angles the chemical symbols of sulphur and potassium hydrate are written: SXKOH. This is pronounced, in slang of course, "souffre et potasse pour l'X" ⁽¹⁴⁾. The X is the emblem of measure ([*199-1] --- *metron*), taken in all its meanings: dimension, area, space, duration, rule, law, boundary or limit. For this occult reason, the international standard of the meter, made of platino-iridium and kept in the pavilion of Breteuil in Sevres, has the shape of an X in its cross-section ⁽¹⁵⁾. All bodies of nature, all beings either in their structure or in their appearance, abide by this fundamental law of radiation, all are subjected to this

measure. The canon of the Gnostics applies this measure to the human body ⁽¹⁶⁾; and Jesus Christ, spirit incarnate, St Andrew, and St Peter, personify its glorious and painful image. Have we not noticed that the aerial organs of vegetables --- be they lofty trees or tiny herbs --- show along with their roots the characteristic divergence of the branches of the X? In what manner do flowers bloom? Section vegetable leaves, leafstalks, nervures, etc., examine the cross-sections under a microscope and you will observe, with your own eyes, the most brilliant, the most marvelous confirmation of this divine will. Diatoms, sea urchins, starfish are other examples; but, without looking any further, open an edible shellfish --- be it cockle, conch, scallop --- and the two valves opened flat will show you convex surfaces endowed with grooves in the double fan shape of the mysterious X. Its whiskers gave the cat its name ⁽¹⁷⁾; we do not doubt that they hide a meaning of high degree of knowledge and that this gracious feline owes the honor of being raised to the rank of Egyptian deities to this secret reason. Speaking of cats, many among us remember the famous Chat-Noir (Black Cat) ⁽¹⁸⁾, which was so popular under Rodolphe Salis' management; but how many knew what sort of esoteric and political center was concealed there, what international masonry was hidden behind the ensign of the artistic cabaret? On the one hand the talent of a fervent, idealistic youth made up of aesthetes seeking glory, carefree, blind, and incapable of suspicion; on the other, the confidences of a mysterious science mixed up with obscure diplomacy, a two-faced tableau deliberately exhibited in a medieval framework. The enigmatic tableau deliberately exhibited in a medieval framework. The enigmatic "tournee des grands ducs" ⁽¹⁹⁾ signified by a cat with scrutinizing eyes under its black coat, with its rigid, disproportionate X-shaped whiskers, and whose heraldic posture gave to the wings of Montmartre mill a symbolic value equal to its own ⁽²⁰⁾, was not a pleasure outing for princes! Whether held by the god's hands, trampled underfoot by him or whether bursting out of the eagle's claws, Zeus' lightning bolts, which make Olympus tremble and scatter terror among mythological humanity, do espouse the graphic shape of radiation. It is the translation of celestial fire or terrestrial fire, of potential or virtual fire which composes or disintegrates, engenders or kills, vivifies or disrupts. Son of the sun which generates it, servant of man who liberate and feeds it, divine fire, downfallen, imprisoned in heavy matter in order to determine its evolution and orient its redemption, is Jesus on his cross, image of the igneous, luminous and spiritual radiation incarnate in all things. It is the *Agnus* (lamb) sacrificed since the beginning of the world and it is also Agni, Vedic god of fire ⁽²¹⁾, but is the Lamb of God bears the cross on his banderole just as Jesus bears it on his shoulder, if he supports it with his foot, it is because he has the sign of it inlaid in his very foot: image outside, reality inside ⁽²²⁾. Whoever receives in this way the celestial spirit of the sacred fire, who bears it within himself and is marked by its sign, has nothing to fear from elemental fire. These elects, disciples of Elias and children of Helios, modern crusaders having for guide the star of their elders, go for the same conquest with the same cry of *God wills it!* ⁽²³⁾.

This higher and spiritual force, acting mysteriously amidst concrete substance, compels crystal to take its form and its immutable characteristics; it is this force which is its pivot, its axis, its generating energy, its geometric will. And this configuration, varying infinitely, though always based on the cross, is the first manifestation of organized form, by condensation and embodiment of light, soul, or fire. Owing to their same arrangements, spider webs old back gnats, nets catch fish, birds, and butterflies without hurting them, fabrics become translucent, wire gauze cuts off flames and oppose the inflammation of gases.

Finally, in space and time, the same immense ideal cross divides the 24 centuries of the cyclic year ([*201-1] --- *Chiliarmos*), and separates the 24 elders of the Apocalypse into four groups of ages, of whom twelve sing the praises of God, while the other twelve bemoan the downfall of man.

How many unsuspected truths remain hidden in the simple sign that Christians renew every day on their own person without always understanding its meaning nor its hidden virtue! "For the word of the cross is folly for those who go astray; but for those who save themselves, that is to say for us, it is the instrument of God's power. This is why it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. What has become of the wise? What has become of the doctors of law? What has become of those spirits interested in the knowledge of this age? Has God not proved the wisdom of this world to be foolishness?'" (24).

How many more know about it than the wild ass which saw the birth of the humble God-Child in Bethlehem, transported him, triumphant, to Jerusalem, and received as a memento of the King of Kings the magnificent black cross that it bears on its back? (25).

In the alchemical domain, the Greek cross and the cross of St Andrew have come meaning that the artist must know. These graphic symbols, reproduced on a great number of manuscripts, and which are in certain texts the object of a special nomenclature, represent among the Greeks and their medieval successors, the crucible of fusion that potters always marked with a small cross (*crucibulum*), sign of good make and of tested solidity. The Greeks also used a similar sign to indicate an earthenware matrass. We know that this vessel was destined for coction and we think that, because of its very material, its usage must have differed little from that of a crucible. Moreover, the word matrass, used in the same sense in the 13th century, comes from the Greek [*202-1], (*metra*) matrix, a word equally used by puffers and applied to the secret vase serving in the maturation of the compound. Nicolas Grosparmy, Norman Adept of the 15th century, gives an illustration of this spherical utensil, laterally tabulated, which he also calls matrix. Furthermore, the X denotes sal ammoniac of the sages or salt of Ammon ([*202-2] --- *ammoniakos*), in other words, salt of the Ram (26), which was formerly written, more accurately, harmoniac, because it realizes the harmony ([*202-3] --- assembling), the agreement of water with fire, because it is the mediator par excellence between heaven and earth, the spirit and the body, the volatile and the fixed. It is also the Sign, without any other qualification, the seal that reveals to man the intrinsic virtues of the prime philosophical substance through certain superficial lineaments. Finally, the X is the Greek hieroglyph for glass, purest of all matters, affirms the masters of the art, and the one nearest to perfection.

We believe we have sufficiently demonstrated the significance of the cross, the depth of its esotericism, and its predominance in symbolism in general (27). As far as the practical realization of the Work is concerned, it certainly offers no less value or teaching. It is the first key, the most considerable and most secret of all the ones that can open the sanctuary of nature to man. This key always appears in visible characters, outlined by nature herself, obedient to the divine will on the cornerstone of the Work, which is also the fundamental stone of the Church and Christian Truth. And so in religious iconography, a key is given to St Peter as his particular virtue, allowing us to distinguish him among the apostles of Christ as the one who was the humble fisherman Simon (cabalistically, [*205-1] --- *C-monos* --- the only ray) and who was to become his earthly spiritual representative after the death of the Savior. We find him represented in that same manner on a very beautiful 16th century statue sculpted in oak wood and kept in the Church of St Etheldreda in London (**Plate XV**). St Peter, standing up, holds a key and displays the Veronica, a peculiarity which makes this remarkable image a unique work of exceptional interest. From the hermetic standpoint, symbolism is certainly doubly expressed thereon, since the meaning of the key is repeated in the Holy Face, miraculous seal of our stone. Furthermore, the Veronica is here presented to us as a veiled replica of the cross, major emblem of Christianity and signature of the sacred Art. In fact, the



LONDON - SAINT ETHELDREDA CHURCH
Saint Peter and the Veronica

word veronica does not come from the Latin *vera iconica* (true and natural image) --- which teaches us nothing --- as certain authors claimed, but from the Greek [*205-2] (*pherenikos*), he who procures victory (from [*205-3] --- *phere* --- to bear, produce, and [*205-4] --- *nike* --- victory). Such is the meaning of the Latin inscription: *In signo vinces*, "You will vanquish by this sign", placed under the Christ monogram of the labarum of Constantine, which corresponds to the Greek formula [*205-5] (*En totu nike*). The sign of the cross, monogram of Christ, of which the X of St Andrew and the key of St Peter are two replicas of equal esoteric value, is indeed the very mark capable of assuring victory by the sure identification of the unique substance exclusively assigned to the philosophical labor.

St Peter holds the keys of Paradise, although only one is sufficient to insure access to the celestial dwelling. But the first key becomes two, and these two intercrossed symbols, one of silver, the other of gold, constitute, with the triple crown, the arms of the sovereign pontiff, heir of Peter's throne. The cross of the Son of Man, reflected in the keys of the Apostle, reveals to men of good will the arcane of universal science and the treasures of the hermetic art. It alone allows him who possesses its meaning, to open the gate of the closed garden of Hesperides and to pick, without fear for his salvation, the Rose of Adepthood.

From what we have said about the cross and the rose, its center, or more exactly, its heart --- this bleeding heart, radiant and glorious of Christ-matter --- it is easy to infer that Louis d'Estissac bore the high title of Rose Cross, mark of higher initiation, brilliant testimony of a positive science made concrete in the substantial reality of the absolute.

Nevertheless, if no one could deny our Adept the grade of Rose Cross, one should not deduce from this fact that he belonged to the hypothetical brotherhood of the same name. To so conclude would be to commit an error. It is important to know how to discern the two Rose Crosses so as not to confuse the true with the false.

We will probably never know what obscure reason guided Valentin Andraea, or rather the German author called by this pseudonym, when he had the pamphlet entitled *Fama Fraternitatis Rosae-Crucis* printed in FrankfurtOder, around 1614. Perhaps he was pursuing a political motive, either attempting to counterbalance, through a fictitious occult power, the authority of the Masonic lodges of his time, or wanting to provoke the grouping of the Rose Crosses who were disseminated everywhere into one single fraternity, depository of all their secrets. However it may be, if the Manifesto of the brotherhood was unable to realize any of its objectives, it still contributed to spread among the public news of an unknown sect, endowed with the most extravagant attributions. According to the testimony of Valentin Andraea, its members, bound by an inviolable oath and submitted to a severe discipline, possessed all the riches and power to accomplish all marvels. They called themselves invisible, claimed they could make gold, silver, precious stones; cure paralytics, the blind, the deaf, all the contagious, and the incurables. They pretended to possess the means to prolong human life beyond its natural limits, to converse with higher and elementals spirits; to discover even the most hidden things, etc. Such a display of prodigies had to strike the imagination of the masses and justify the assimilation which was soon made of the Rose Crosses, thus introduced, with magicians, sorcerers, Satanists, and necromancers⁽²⁸⁾. A rather disobliging reputation which they shared, moreover, in certain provinces with the Freemasons themselves. Let us add that the latter had hastened to adopt and introduce into their hierarchy this new title out of which they made a rank without attempting to know its symbolic significance or its true origin⁽²⁹⁾.

In short, the mystical fraternity, in spite of the voluntary affiliation of a few learned personalities whose good faith was taken by surprise by the Manifesto, never existed anywhere else than in the desire of its author. It is a fable and nothing more. As for the Masonic rank, it also has no philosophical significance whatsoever. Finally, if we mention, without entering them, those little chapels where one get lazily promoted under the Rose Cross banner, we will have uncovered the diverse modalities of the apocryphal Rose Cross.

Moreover, we will not maintain that Valentin Andraea exaggerated much the extraordinary virtues that certain philosophers, more enthusiastic than sincere, give to the Universal Medicine. If he attributes to the brothers what could only belong to the Magistry, at least we find therein the proof that his conviction was based upon the reality of the stone. Further, his pseudonym clearly shows that he knew quite well what part of occult truth entered into the symbol of the cross and the rose, the emblem used by the ancient magi and known by all antiquity. To such an extent that after reading the Manifesto, we are led to see there a mere alchemical treatise, whose interpretation is neither more difficult nor less expressive than so many other writings of the same nature. The tomb of the Knight Christian Rosenkreuz (the Christian and Rosicrucian cabalist) presents a singular identity with the allegorical cave, furnished with a chest of lead, which is inhabited by the fearsome guardian of the hermetic treasure ⁽³⁰⁾, that fierce genie whom the *Songe Verd (Green Dream)* calls Seganissegede ⁽³¹⁾. A light emanating from a golden sun lights the cave and symbolizes the incarnate spirit, divine spark imprisoned in things, already discussed. Enclosed in the tomb are the numerous secrets of wisdom and this cannot come as a surprise since, the principles of the Work being perfectly known, the analogy naturally leads us to the discovery of connected truths and facts.

A more detailed analysis of this booklet would teach us nothing new except for a few indispensable conditions of prudence, discipline, and silence for the use of Adepts; judicious advice undoubtedly, but superfluous. True Rose Cross, the only ones who are worthy of bearing this title and provide the material proof of their science, have no need of it. Living isolated in their austere retreats, they do not fear ever being known, not even by their brothers. A few, nevertheless, occupied important positions: d'Espagnet, Jacques Couer, Jean Lallemand, Louis d'Estissac, the Count de St Germain are among those; but they knew how to mask the origin of their fortune so skillfully that no one was able to recognize the Rose Cross under the features of the gentleman. Which biographer would dare to certify that Philalethes -- -this friend of truth --- was the pseudonym of the nobleman Thomas Vaughan, and that under the epithet of Sethon (the wrestler) was hidden an illustrious member of a powerful Scottish family, the Lords of Winton? By attributing this strange and paradoxical privilege of invisibility to the brothers, Valentin Andraea recognizes the impossibility of identifying them, much as great lords traveling incognito in private dress and carriage. They are invisible because unknown. Nothing characterizes them except modesty, simplicity, and tolerance, virtues that are generally scorned in our conceited civilization prone to the ridiculous exaggeration of personality.

Besides these highborn men we have just mentioned, how many other scientists preferred to bear their Rosicrucian dignity without pomp, living among the working people in a voluntary mediocrity, and the daily practice of professions without nobility! Such is the case of a so-called Leriche, a humble blacksmith, unknown Adept and possessor of the hermetic gem. This gentleman of an exceptional modesty would have been forever unknown if Cambriel ⁽³²⁾ had not taken the trouble to name him, telling in detail what he did to bring back to life the young man from Lyon, Candy, an 18-year old whom a lethargic attack was about to kill (1774). Leriche shows us what the true sage must be and how he must live. If all Rosicrucians had maintained themselves in this prudent reserve, if they had observed the same discretion, we

would not have to deplore the loss of so many quality artists, carried away by blundering zeal, blind faith, or pushed by the irresistible need to attract attention. This conceited desire for glory led Jean du Chatelet, baron of Beausoleil, to the Bastille prison in 1640, where he died five years later; Paykul, a Livonian ⁽³³⁾ philosopher, transmutes before the Senate of Stockholm and is condemned to be beheaded by Charles XII; Vinache, man of the lower class, knowing neither how to read nor write, but on the other hand knowing the great Work down to its smallest details, also painfully expiates his insatiable taste for luxury and notoriety. It is to him that Rene Voyer de Paulmy d'Argenson appeals to manufacture the gold which the financier Samuel Bernard intends for the payment of the debts of France. Once the operation is finished, Paulmy d'Argenson, in gratefulness for his faithful services, captures Vinache on February 17, 1704, throws him in the Bastille, and has his throat cut March 19th, coming in person to make sure that the murder has been executed, and then has him clandestinely buried March 22nd around six at night under the name of Etienne Durand, age 60 --- when Vinache was actually only 38 --- and completes his crime by publishing that he died of a stroke! ⁽³⁴⁾. Who then, after reading this, would find it strange that alchemists refuse to reveal their secrets and dared to prefer to remain shrouded in mystery and silence?

The pretended Brotherhood of the Rose Cross never had any social existence. Adepts bearing this title are only brothers through knowledge and the success of their work. No oath compels them, no statute binds them together, no rule apart from the hermetic discipline, freely accepted, voluntarily observed, influences their free will. All that could have been written or related according to the legend attributed to the theologian de Cawle is apocryphal and worthy at most of feeding the romantic imagination of a Bulwer Lytton. The Rose Cross did not know one another; they had neither meeting place nor headquarters, nor temple, ritual, or external mark of recognition. They did not pay dues and would never have accepted the title given to some brothers, of Knights of the Stomach since banquets were unknown to them. They were and still are isolated workers dispersed throughout the world, "cosmopolitan" searchers in the narrowest meaning of the word. Since the Adepts do not recognize any hierarchic grade, it follows that the Rose Cross is not a rank but the sole consecration of their secret works, that of experience, positive enlightenment, whose existence had been revealed to them by strong faith. True, some masters were able to assemble young aspirants around them and accepted the mission of counseling them, directing them, orienting their efforts and creating some small, sometimes recognized, often mysterious, initiation centers whose souls they were. But we certify --- and very pertinent reasons allow us to say so --- that there has never been among the possessors of the title any other connection but that of scientific truth confirmed by the acquisition of the stone. If the Rose Cross are brothers through discovery, work, and science, brothers through acts and works, it is in the manner of the philosophical concept which considers all human beings members of the same human family.

In summary, the great classical authors who taught the precepts of our philosophy and the arcane of the art in their literary or artistic works, those also who left irrefutable proofs of their mastery, all are brothers of the true Rose Cross. And it is to these learned people, famous, unknown, that the anonymous translator of a famous book ⁽³⁵⁾ addresses himself when he says in his Preface: "As it is only by the cross that the true faithful must be tried, it is to you Brothers of the true Rose Cross, who possess all the treasures of the world, that I am appealing. I defer entirely to your pious and wise advice; I know that it can be but good, because I know how gifted you are with virtue above the rest of men. As you are the dispensers of Science, and that consequently I owe you what I know, if I may say that I know something, I want things to return whence they came (according to the institution that God established in Nature). *'Ad locum', says the Preacher, 'unde exeunt flumina revertuntur, ut iteru fluant'*: 'All is yours, all comes from you, and so all will return to you'".

May the reader excuse us for this digression which led us farther than we wished. But it seemed necessary to us to clearly establish what is the true and traditional hermetic Order of the Rose Cross, to isolate it from other common groups placed under the same banner ⁽³⁶⁾, and to allow to single out the rare initiates from the imposters who draw vanity from a title whose acquisition they could not justify.

(1) Scallop shells. In French the name relates to St James of Compostella --- see Translator's note.

(2) *Lettre aux Vrais Disciples d'Hermes (Letter to the True Disciples of Hermes)*, in the *Triomphe Hermetique (Hermetic Triumph)*.

(3) "If gold is joined eleven times with her (the water), it emits its seed and becomes debilitated to the point of death; then the seed conceives and engenders a son, clearer than its father".

(4) It isn't rare to find alchemy characterized as the Art of Music in medieval texts. This name is the motif of the effigy of the two musicians who can be noticed among the balusters completing the upper story of the Manor of the Salamander at Lisieux. We have also seen them reproduced on the house of Adam and Eve at Le Mans, and we can again find them in the Cathedral of Amiens (the kings-musicians of the high gallery), as well as in the dwelling of the counts of Champagne, commonly called house of the musicians in Reims. In the beautiful plates illustrating the *Ampitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae* of Heinrich Khunrath (1610), there is one representing the interior of a sumptuous laboratory; in the middle of this laboratory there is a table covered with musical instruments and many musical scores. The Greek word [*194-1] (*musikos*) has for root [*194-2] (*mythos*), fable, apologue, allegory, which also means spirit, the hidden meaning of a tale.

(5) See Translator's note.

(6) In Greek [*194-3] (*aggelos*), angel, also means messenger, a position which the divinities of Mt Olympus had reserved for Hermes.

(7) Philalethes: *Introitus apertus ad oclusum Regis palatium*, in Langlet-Dufresnoy, *Histoire de la Philosophie hermetique (History of Hermetic Philosophy)*, Paris, Coustelier, 1742, vol. II, ch. 13, 20.

(8) Translator's Note: The author uses the adjective Rose Cross instead of Rosicrucian and explains why further on.

(9) The symbol of light is found in the visual organ of man, window of the soul opened onto nature. It is the X-shaped crossing of bands and the optic nerves which anatomists call *chiasma* (from Greek [*197-4] --- *chiasma*, disposed as a cross, root [*197-5] --- *chiazō*, to cross in X). The intercrossed wicker of chairs led to the name of Cayelles ([*197-6], ray of light) in the dialect of Picardie.

(10) The ceiling of Lallemand's house in Bourges offers a remarkable example of this image.

(11) *La Clavicle de la Science Hermetique (The Clavicle of Hermetic Science)*, written by an inhabitant of the north during his leisure hours, 1732; Amsterdam, Pierre Mortier, 1751.

(12) Translator's note: Famous French engineering school known as the X

(13) Translator's note: Each promotion is referred to as taupe (mole in English), and the students of a promotion are called taupin.

(14) Translator's note: Literally sulphur and potash for X, but in French slang it means "suffer and swot up for the school".

(15) We are not speaking here of the copy #8 kept in the Conservatory of Arts and Professions in Paris, which is the legal standard, but of the international prototype.

(16) Leonardo da Vinci used and taught it, transporting it from the mystical domain to that of aesthetic morphology.

(17) X, the Song of Light. The Picard dialect, guardian of the traditions of the sacred language like the Provençal, has kept in English the hard primitive ka to designate the cat (chat in French).

(18) Translator's note: Very famous cabaret in Montmartre in the 19th century.

(19) Translator's note: Literally, "the round of the grand dukes", which means in French slang: to go out on a spree.

(20) Rodolphe Salis imposed on the artist Steinlein, author of the vignette, the image of the Mill of the Galette, that of the cat as well as the color of the coat, the eyes, and the geometric straightness of the whiskers. The cabaret of the Black Cat, founded in 1881, disappeared at the death of its creator in 1897.

(21) The Hindu swastika, or in French croix grammee, cross with branches in the shape of a gamma g, is the sign of divine, immortal, and pure spirit, the symbol of life and fire and not, as people wrongly believe, a utensil designed to produce flame. [Translator's note: This material was written before the existence of Nazi Germany].

(22) Let us not be accused of leading our reader into useless and vain reveries. We assert that we speak in a positive manner, and initiates will not be mistaken by it. Let us say this for the others. Boil a sheep's foot in water until the bones can be easily separated; you will find one among them which bears a medial furrow on one side and separated; you will find one among them which bears a medial furrow on one side and a Maltese Cross on the opposite side. This signed bone is the true knucklebone of the Ancient; with it Greek youth played their favorite game (similar to jacks). This bone was called [*201-2] (*astragalos*), word formed from [*201-3] (*aster*, starfish, star of the sea, because of the radiating seal we are talking about, and of [*201-4] (*galos*) used for [*201-5] (*gala*), milk, which corresponds to Virgin's Milk (*maris stella*) or Mercury of the Philosophers. We will avoid speaking about another etymology even more revealing because we must obey philosophical discipline which forbids us from unveiling the entire mystery. Our intention is therefore limited to awakening the sagacity of the investigator, allowing him to acquire through personal effort that secret teaching whose elements the most sincere authors have never wished to uncover. All their treatises being achromatic, the hope of finding the least indication concerning the basis and foundation of the art is useless. For this reason we are attempting as far as possible to render these sealed works useful by supplying the matter which formerly constituted the first initiation, *i.e.*, the verbal revelation essential to understand them.

(23) A cabalistic expression holding the key to the hermetic mystery. *Dieu le Veut* (God wills it) is taken for *Dieu le Feu* (God the Fire), which explains and justifies the badge adopted by the crusader knights and its color: a red cross borne on the right shoulder.

(24) St Paul: I Corinthians 1:18-20

(25) This signature caused the donkey to be called St Christopher of Palm Sunday, because Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, that very day when alchemists customarily begin their Great Work.

(26) Ammon-Ra, the great solar divinity of the Egyptians, was normally represented with a ram's head, or, when he kept his human head, with spiral horns that originated above his ears. This god, to whom the ram was sacrificed, had a colossal temple in Thebes (Karnak); one entered it by following an avenue lined with crouching rams. Remember that the ram is the image of the water of the sages, just as the solar disk, with or without the uraeus --- another attribute of Ammon --- is that of the secret fire. Ammon, saline mediator, completes the trinity of the principles of the Work, of which he realizes the concord, unity, and perfection it realizes in the philosophers' stone.

(27) So it is that Gothic cathedrals had their facades built according to the essential lines of the alchemical symbol of spirit and that their floor plan is a copy of the imprint of the redeeming cross. Inside they all show these bold interesting ribs in the form of crosses whose invention properly belongs to the Freemasons, enlightened builders of the Middle Ages. So that in the medieval temples the faithful find themselves situated between two crosses, one lower and earthly on which they walk --- the image of their daily Calvary --- the other, higher and celestial, towards which they aspire, but which only their eyes allow them to reach.

(28) Edouard Fournier, in his *Enigmas des rues de Paris (Enigmas of the Streets of Paris)*, 1860, mentions "the Sabbath of the Rosicrucian Brothers" which took place in 1623 in the country solitude of Menilmontant. On a note he adds: "In a booklet of the time, *Effroyables pactions (Awful pacts)*, etc., reproduced in vol. 9 of our *Varieties Historiques et Littéraires (Historical and Literary Varieties)*, it is said that they gathered 'sometimes in the Montmartre quarries, sometimes along the springs of Belleville and there they set forth the lesson privately before making them public'".

(29) The grade of Rose Cross is the eighth of the French Masonic rite and the eighteenth of the Scottish rite.

(30) Cf. *Azoth ou Moyen de faire l'Or cache des Philosophes (Azoth or the Means to Make the Philosophers' Hidden Gold)*; Paris, Pierre Molet, 1659.

(31) An anagram for Genie of the sages --- in French --- *Genie des sages*.

(32) See L.P.-Francois Cambriel: *Cours de Philosophie Hermetique ou d'Alchimie, en dix-neuf lecons (Course in Hermetic Philosophy or Alchemy, in 19 Lessons)*; Paris, Lacour et Maistrasse, 1843.

(33) Translator's note: Livonia no longer exists today as a country; it was located between today's Estonia and Lithuania, and its capital was Riga.

(34) *Un Mystere a la Bastille, Etienne Vinache, medecin empirique et alchimique (A Mystery at the Bastille: Etienne Vinache, Empirical and Alchemical Doctor)*, by Dr Roger Goulard, of Brie-Comte-Robert; *Bulletin de la Societe d'Histoire de la Medicine (Bulletin of the French Society of the History of Medicine)*, vol 14, no. 11 and 12.

(35) *Le Texte d'Alchymie et le Songe Verd (Book of Alchemy and the Green Dream)*; Paris, Laurent d'Houry, 1695. Preface, et seq.

(36) In the 19th century, two Rosicrucian Orders were created and quickly fell into oblivion: (1) The Kabbalistic Order of the Rose Cross, founded by Stanislaus de Guaita; (2) The Order of the Rose Cross of the Temple and the Grail, founded in Toulous around 1850 by the Viscount of Lapasse, spagyric physician, student of Prince Balbiani of Palermo, supposedly a disciple of Cagliostro. Josephin Peladan, who gave himself the title of Sar, was one of the aesthetic animators. This idealistic movement, lacking enlightened initiatic direction and a solid philosophical basis, could only have a limited duration. The Rosicrucian Salon opened its doors from 1892 to 1897 and then ceased to exist.

LOUIS D'ESTISSAC III

Let's resume our study of the strange motif fancied by Louis d'Estissac for the hermetic decoration of his fireplace.

On the right panel, opposite the one we have just analyzed, we notice the previously identified old man's mask, holding in his jaw two plant stems with leaves, each bearing a flower bud about to open. These stems set a kind of open almond, inside which we can catch sight of a vase decorated with scales and containing flower buds, fruit, and ears of corn. Here is the hieroglyphic expression of vegetation, nutrition, and the growth of the newborn body previously discussed. The corn alone, purposely placed next to the flowers and fruit, is a very revealing symbol. Its Greek name [*213-1] (*zea*) derives from the Greek [*213-2] (*zao*), meaning to live, subsist, exist. The scaly vase represents the primitive substance which nature offers to the artists, extracted from the mine and with which he begins his labor. From it he extracts the diverse elements which he needs; with and through it his entire labor is accomplished. Philosophers have described it in the image of the black dragon covered with scales, which the Chinese call Loung, whose analogy with the hermetic monster is perfect. Like the monster it is a kind of winged serpent with a horned head, emitting fire and flame through its nostrils, with a black and scaly body borne on four stocky legs, each armed with five claws. The gigantic dragon on Scythian banners was called Apophis. The Greek word [*213-3] (*apophysis*), which means excrescence, offspring, has for its root [*213-4] (*apophuo*) with the meaning to put forth, grow, produce, be born from. The vegetative power, indicated by the fructifications of the symbolic vase is therefore expressly confirmed in the mythical dragon which divides into common mercury or solvent, Later the primitive mercury, joined to some fixed body, renders it volatile, living, vegetative, and fructifying. It then changes its name by changing its qualities and becomes the mercury of the sages, the humid metallic radical, the celestial salt or the salt in bloom. "*In mercurio est quicquid quaerunt Sapientes*" --- all that the sages are looking for within mercury, our ancient authors vied with each other in repeating. One could not better express on stone the nature and the function of the vase which so many artists know without being aware of what it can produce. Without it, without this mercury, drawn from our Magnesia, Philalethes affirms, lighting the lamp or the furnace of the philosophers is useless. We will not say any more here because we will have the opportunity to resume to topic and develop later on the major Arcanum of the great art.

LOUIS D'ESTISSAC IV

In front of the central panel, the observer cannot refrain from giving an involuntary start of surprise due to its extremely unusual decoration (**Plate XVI**).

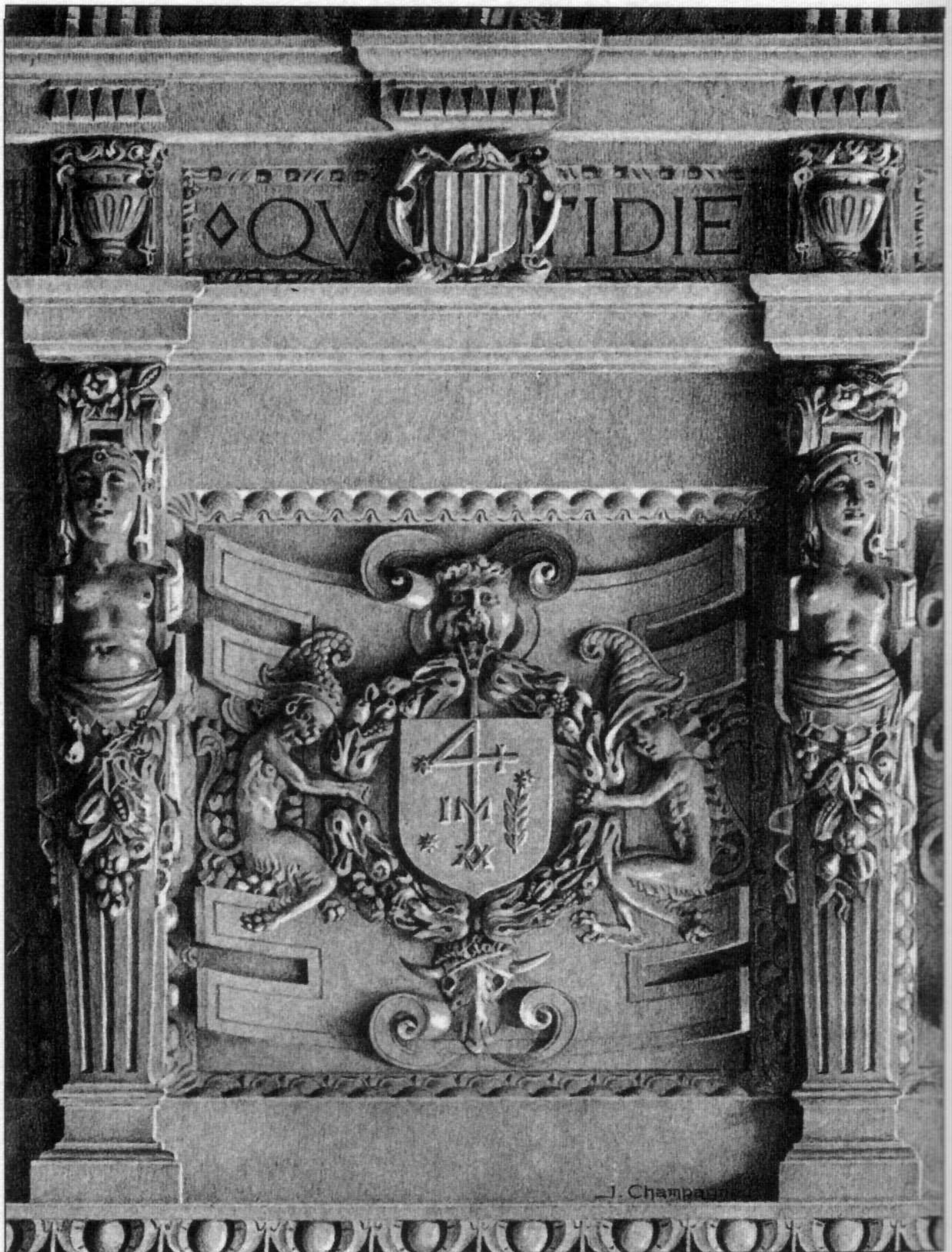
Two human monsters hold a crown formed of leaves and fruit which circumscribes a simple French shield. One of the monsters shows the horrible face of a harelip on a hairless and breasted torso. The other has the bright face of a mischievous and unruly boy, but with the hairy chest of anthropoids. If the arms and hands present no other peculiarity than their excessive emaciation, by contrast, the lower limbs, covered with thick long hairs, end, in one monster, with feline claws and in the other with raptor claws. These nightmarish beings endowed with long curved tails are covered with incredible helmets, one scaly, the other striped, whose tops coil in the manner of an ammonite fossil. Between these stephanophores of repulsive appearance and placed above them in the composition axis, a grimacing human mask with round eyes and fuzzy hair burdening the already low forehead, holds in his bestial open jaw the central shield with a light cord. Finally, a bucranium occupying the lower part of the panel completes this apocalyptic, four part composition on a macabre note.

As for the shield, the bizarre figures it bears, seems to be taken from some old magician's book. Upon first examination one could believe that they were borrowed from the somber *Clavicles of Solomon*, images traced with fresh blood on virgin parchment, which indicate in their frightening zigzags the ritual movements that the forked wand must perform under the sorcerer's fingers.

Such are the symbolic elements offered to the sagacity of the student and skillfully disguised in the decorative harmony of this strange subject. We shall attempt to explain them as clearly as possible, even if it entails asking the philosophical language for help or resorting to the language of the gods, when we deem, without overstepping the mark, that we cannot push our teaching any further.

The two gnomes ⁽¹⁾ facing each other translate --- the reader will have guessed --- our two metallic principles, first bodies or natures with whose help the Work is started, perfected and completed. They are the sulphurous and mercurial genies appointed to guard the subterranean treasures, nocturnal artisans of the hermetic work familiar to the sage whom they serve, honor, and enrich with their unceasing labor. They are the possessors of earthly secrets and revealers of mineral mysteries. The gnome, fictitious creature, deformed but active, is the esoteric expression of metallic life, of the occult dynamism of raw bodies which the art can condense into a pure substance. The rabbinical tradition reports in the Talmud that a gnome cooperated with the building of the Temple of Solomon, which means that the philosophers' stone must have played some part in it. But nearer to us, don't our gothic cathedrals, according to George Stahl, owe the inimitable coloration of their stained glass windows to it? "Our stone", writes an anonymous author ⁽²⁾, "has two other very surprising virtues; the first on glass to which it gives internally all sorts of colors, such as in the windows of Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, and those of the churches of Saint-Gatien and Saint-Matin in the city of Tours".

Thus the obscure, latent, and potential life of the two primitive mineral substances is developed through the contact, the fight, and the union of their opposite natures, one igneous, the other aqueous. Those are our elements, and there are no others. When philosophers speak



FONTENAY-LE-COMTE - TERRE-NEUVE CASTLE
The Fireplace of the Grand Salon - Central motif

of three principles by describing and purposely singling them out, they use a subtle artifice meant to throw the neophyte into the most cruel uneasiness. We therefore certify with the best authors that two bodies are sufficient to accomplish the magistry from beginning to end. "It is impossible to acquire the possession of our mercury", says the *Ancient War of the Knights*, "in any other way than by means of two bodies one of which cannot receive the perfection it requires, without the other". If we must admit a third, we shall find it in the one which results from their combination and born from their mutual destruction. For no matter how much you look and multiply the experiments, you will never find any other parents of the stone besides the above mentioned two bodies, called principles from which comes the third one, heir of the qualities and the mixed virtues of its parents. This important point is well worth being stated precisely. These two principles, hostile because opposite, are so expressive on Louis d'Estissac's fireplace that even the beginner can recognize them without difficulty. We recognize here, humanized, the hermetic dragons described by Nicolas Flamel, one winged --- the hare-lipped monster --- the other wingless --- the gnome with the hairy torso. "Contemplate these two dragons carefully", says the Adept ⁽³⁾, "for they are the true principles of philosophy which the Sages have not dared to show their own children. The wingless one below is the fixed or the male and the one above is the volatile or the female, black and obscure ⁽⁴⁾, which will dominate for several months. The first is called sulphur or heat and dryness. And the last is called quicksilver or coldness and humidity. They are the sun and the moon, of mercurial source and sulphurous origin which, by means of continual fire, beautify themselves with royal ornaments so as to vanquish, once they are united, and change any metallic thing --- solid, hard, and strong --- into quintessence. They are the serpents and dragons that ancient Egyptians painted as a circle, head biting the tail, to express that they came from one and the same thing, which alone was enough, and that it perfected itself in its contour and circulation. They are the dragons that the ancient poets charged with guarding without sleeping the golden apples of the gardens of the Hesperide virgins. They are the same ones on which Jason, during his adventure of the Golden Fleece, poured the juice prepared by the beautiful Medea and whose discourse so filled the books of the philosophers, that no philosopher ever existed who did not write about them, from the true Hermes Trismegistus, Orpheus, Pythagoras, Artephius, Morienus and others up to myself. They are the two serpents sent and given by Juno who is the metallic nature, which the strong Hercules, that is to say the Sage, must strangle in his crib, that is to say vanquish and kill them so as to make them rot, corrupt, and engender at the beginning of his Work. They are the two snakes attached around the Caduceus and the stick of Mercury with which he wields his great power and transfigures himself as he wishes. He, says Haly, who kills one of them will also kill the other because one cannot die but with his brother. These two (which Avicenna calls Bitch of Khorassan and Dog of Armenia), being then united in the vessel of the sepulcher, bite each other cruelly and through their great venom and furious rage never leave each other from the moment they have grabbed each other. They are the two sperms, masculine and feminine, described at the beginning of my Philosophical Rosary which are engendered (says Rasis, Avicenna, and Abraham the Jew) in the kidneys, entrails, and from the operations of the four elements. They are the humidity of metals, Sulphur, and Quicksilver, not the common ones which are sold by merchants and apothecaries, but those which give us so many beautiful and dear bodies which we love so much. These two sperms, said Democritus, cannot be found on the earth of the living".

Snakes or dragons, the hieroglyphic forms mentioned by the old masters as figurative of the materials ready to be used in the work, present on the artwork of Fontenay-le-Comte some very remarkable peculiarities due to the author's cabalistic genius and his very expensive knowledge. That which esoterically signifies these anthropomorphic beings is not only their griffin feet and their hairy appendages, but also and above all their helmets. The headgear

which ends in a horn of Ammon and is called in Greek [*220-1] (*cranos*, because it covers the head and protects the skull [*220-2] --- *cranion*), allows us to identify them. The Greek word used to indicate used to indicate the head (*cranion*), already brings a useful indication since it also marks the location of Calvary, the Golgotha where Jesus, Redeemer of men, had to suffer his Passion in his flesh before transfiguring himself into spirit. And our two principles one of which bears the cross and the other the lance which will pierce his flank ⁽⁵⁾ are an image, a reflection of the Passion of Christ. Just like him, if they must resuscitate into a new clear, glorious, and spiritualized body, they must together climb their Calvary, suffer martyrdom, endure the torments of fire, and die of a slow agony at the end of a long hard fight ([*221-1] -- *agonia*).

It is known, on the other hand, that the puffers called their alembic, *homo galeatus* --- man covered with a helmet --- because it was composed of a cucurbit, that is, an inflated part covered with a helmet. Our two helmeted geniuses cannot represent anything other than the alembic of the sages, or the two assembled bodies, the container and the contained, the matter itself and its proper vessel. For if the reactions must be provoked by one (thee agent), they can only happen by breaking the balance of the other (the patient) which is used as a receptacle and a vase for the opposite energy of the adverse nature.

In the present motif the agent is indicated by its grooved, striped helmet. Indeed the Greek [*221-1] (*rabdodes*), grooved, striped, has for a root word, [*221-2] (*rabdos*), little stick, scepter, caduceus, lance, dart, javelin, needle. The different meanings characterize most of the attributes of the active, masculine, and fixed matter. It is first of all the stick that Mercury throws between the grass snake and the serpent (Rhea and Jupiter), around which they curl crating the Caduceus, emblem of peace and reconciliation. All hermetic authors speak of a terrible fight between two dragons and Mythology teaches us that such was the origin of the attribute of Hermes who provoked their agreement by putting his stick between them. It is the sign of union and of concord which one must be capable of realizing between fire and water. And fire being represented by a triangle hieroglyph Delta and water by the same, but inverted triangle, the two superimposed signs form the image of the star sure mark of union, pacification and procreation, because the star (*stella*) means fixation of the sun ⁽⁶⁾. And as a matter of fact the sign can only be seen after the fight when everything has become calm and when the first effervescences have stopped. The Seal of Solomon, geometric figure, resulting from the assembly of the triangles of fire and water confirm the union of the sky and earth. It is the messianic star announcing the birth of the King of Kings; moreover the Greek [*221-3] (*kerukeion*), caduceus, derived from [*221-4] (*kerukeuo*), to publish, to announce reveals that the distinctive emblem of Mercury is the sign of the good news. Among North American natives the peace pipe, the calumet which they use in their civil and religious ceremonies is a symbol similar to the caduceus by its form as well as by its meaning. "It is", says Noel ⁽⁷⁾, "a large smoking pipe of red, black, or white marble. It does resemble a mace; its head is very well polished and the stem two and a half feet long is a rather long cane, ornamented with feathers of all kinds of colors with several braids of women's hair interlaced in various fashions. To it are attached two wings which makes it resemble the caduceus of Mercury or the stick that peace ambassadors once upon a time carried. This cane is implanted in the necks of ospreys, birds with white and black spots as big as our geese. This peace pipe is greatly venerated among the savages who respect it as a precious gift that the Sun makes to man. And so, it is a symbol of peace, the seal of all undertaking of important affairs and of public ceremonies". Hermes' stick is truly the scepter of the sovereign of our art, hermetic gold --- vile, abject, despised, more sought after by the philosopher than natural gold; the stick that the high priest Aaron changed into a serpent and the one which Moses (Ex. 17:5-6) --- imitated in this by Jesus ⁽⁸⁾ --- smites the rock, in other words the passive matter, and pure water, hidden

in its midst, springs forth; it is the ancient dragon of Basil Valentine whose tongue and tail end with a sting, which brings us back to the symbolic serpent, *serpens aut draco qui caudam devoravit* ⁽⁹⁾.

As for the second body --- passive and feminine --- Louis d'Estissac had it represented under the shape of a harelipped gnome, equipped with breasts, head covered with a scaly helmet. We already knew from the descriptions left by classical authors that this mineral substance as it is extracted from its mine is scaly, black, hard, and dry. Some have called it leprous. The Greek [*222-1] (*lepis, lepidos*), scale, has among its derivatives the Greek [*222-2] (*lepra*), leprosy because this frightful infection covers the epiderm with pustules and scales. And so it is essential to drive away the coarse and superficial impurity from the body by removing its scaly envelope ([*222-3] --- *lepizo*), an operation which we easily realize with the aid of the active principle, the agent with the grooved helmet. Taking as an example Moses' gesture it will suffice to sharply strike this rock ([*223-1] --- *lepas*) of arid and dry appearance three times in order to see the mysterious water that it contains, spring forth. It is the first solvent, common mercury of the sages, faithful servant of the artist, the only thing he needs and that nothing can replace according to the testimony of Geber and of the most ancient Adepts. Its volatile quality which allowed philosophers to assimilate this mercury to the common hydrargyrum, is moreover emphasized on our bas-relief by the tiny lepidoptera wings (Greek [*223-2], [*223-3] --- *lepidos-pteron*) affixed to the shoulders of the symbolic monster. However, in our opinion, the best name that authors have given to their mercury seems to be Spirit of magnesia. For they call magnesia (Greek [*223-4] --- *magnes*, magnet) the coarse feminine matter which attracts by an occult virtue the spirit enclosed beneath the hard shell of the steel of the sages. The latter, penetrating like a burning flame into the body of the passive nature, burns, consumes its heterogeneous parts, drives away the arsenical (leprous) sulphur, and animates the pure mercury it contains and which appears in the conventional form of a liquor both humid and igneous --- the fire water of the Ancients --- which we call Spirit of Magnesia and universal solvent.

"Just as steel pulls the magnet to itself", writes Philalethes ⁽¹⁰⁾, "so the magnet turns toward the steel. This is what the magnet of the sages does to their steel. This is why, having already mentioned that our steel is the matrix of gold, we must equally point out that our magnet is the true matrix of the steel of the sages".

Finally --- detail useless to the work, that we nevertheless indicate because it comes to prove our examination --- a word close to [223-2] *lepis*, the word [*223-3], *leporis*, once indicated the hare in the Eolian dialect (Latin --- *lepus, leporis*), hence this facial deformity, at first inexplicable yet necessary for the cabalistic expression which stamps the face of our gnome with its typical physiognomy.

Arrived at this point, we must stop for a moment and wonder; the path, bushy and covered with brambles and thorns, becomes impassable. Instinctively we guess a gaping precipice, barely a few steps away. Cruel uncertainty. To continue to advance, holding the disciple's hand, would be an act of wisdom? In truth Pandora accompanies us, but alas! What can we expect from her? The fatal box imprudently opened is empty now. Nothing is left to us except hope!

At this point, the authors who already are rather enigmatic about the preparation of the solvent, remain obstinately silent. Shrouding the process of the second operation in secrecy, they move directly into descriptions of the third one, namely the phrases and regimens of coction. Then resuming the terminology used for the first one, they let the beginner believe

that the common mercury is the same as Rebis or compost and as such must be evenly cooked in a sealed container. Philalethes, although writing under the same discipline, pretends to fill the void left by his predecessors. Upon reading his *Introitus*, we do not perceive any cuts, only false manipulation make up for the lack of true ones. They fill the gaps in such a manner that the ones and the others are connected and knit without leaving any trace of artifice. Such a flexibility makes it impossible for the layman to separate the wheat from the chaff, the bad from the good, the error from the truth. It is but necessary for us to assert how much we disapprove of similar abuses which are, in spite of the rules, nothing better than disguised mystification. The cabala and symbolism offer enough resources to express what must be understood by only a few. Moreover we feel that silence is preferable to the most skillfully presented lie. You might be surprised that we bear such a harsh judgment on a part of this famous Adept's work but others before us have not been afraid to address to him the same criticism. Tollius, Naxagoras, Limojon de Saint-Didier especially, unmasked the insidious and perfidious formula and we are in complete agreement with them. Because the mystery veiling our second operation is the greatest of all; it alludes to the elaboration of the philosophical mercury which has never been taught openly. Some resorted to allegory, enigmas, and parables, but most of the masters abstained from discussing this difficult question. "Truly", writes Limojon de Saint-Didier ⁽¹¹⁾, "some philosophers seemingly quite sincere, nevertheless throw the artists into error solemnly asserting that who does not know the gold of the philosophers will however be able to find it in common gold cooked with the Mercury of the Philosophers. Those are Philalethes' sentiments. He affirms that Trevisan, Zachaire, and Flamel have followed this path. He also adds that this is not the true path of the Sages although it leads to the same end. But these affirmations, sincere as they appear, nevertheless cannot but mislead artists who, eager to follow the same Philalethes through the purification and the animation that he teaches of common mercury so as to turn it into the Mercury of the Philosophers (a glaring error behind which he has hidden the secret of the mercury of the Sages) and undertake, taking his word for it, a very arduous and definitely impossible work. Thus, after a time-consuming work filled with difficulties and dangers, they obtain a mercury only slightly more impure than before they started, instead of a mercury animated with the celestial quintessence. A deplorable error that has lost, broken, and wills till ruin a great number of artists". Yet the seekers who successfully overcome the first obstacles and have drawn the living water from the ancient Fountain possess a key enabling them to open the doors of the hermetic laboratory ⁽¹²⁾. If they err, and get bored, if they multiply their attempts without discovering the successful goal, it probably results from the fact that they have not acquired an adequate knowledge of the doctrine. They should not despair however. Mediation, study, and above all a strong unshakeable faith will finally bring Heaven's blessing upon their work. "For truly I say to you", says Jesus (Matt. 17:19), "if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Move from here to there, and it shall move; nothing shall be impossible to you". For faith, spiritual certainty of truth not yet demonstrated, prescience of what is feasible, is the torch that God has placed into the human soul to enlighten, to guide, to instruct, and to elevate it. Our senses sometimes lead us astray; faith never misleads us. "Faith only", writes an anonymous philosopher ⁽¹³⁾, "formulates a positive will; doubt makes it neutral, and skepticism negative. Believing before knowing is cruel for scientists, but what do you expect? Nature can't change her ways, not even for them and she claims to impose faith upon us. As for myself, I admit that I have always found her generous enough to overlook this whim of hers".

May the researchers, before incurring further expenses, learn that which differentiates the first mercury from the philosophical mercury. Once one knows exactly what one is looking for, it becomes easier to orient one's steps. May they know that their solvent or common mercury is the result of Nature's work while the mercury of the sages remains a product of art. When

manufacturing the later, the artist, applying natural laws, knows what he wants to obtain. The same does not hold true for common mercury, as God forbids men to penetrate its mystery. No philosopher knows, and many admit it, in what manner the initial matters, while in contact with one another, react, interpenetrate, and finally unite under the veil of darkness which envelops, from beginning to end, the intimate exchanges of this peculiar procreation. This explains why the writers proved so cautious about the topic of philosophical mercury, whose successive phases the operator can follow, understand, and direct at his will. If the technique requires a certain amount of time and demands some labor, it is on the other hand extremely simple. Any layman who knows to feed a fire, will perform it as well as an expert alchemist. It neither requires any special trick nor professional skill but only the knowledge of an unusual artifice, which is the secret of secrets that has not been revealed and probably never will be. About this operation, whose success ensures the possession of the philosophical Rebis, Jacques le Tesson ⁽¹³⁾, quoting Damascene, writes that the Adept at the time of undertaking the work, "looked around the entire room to see if there were not some flies therein, meaning thereby that it could not ever be kept in too much secrecy for the danger that might result". Before going further let us say of this unknown artifice --- which from the chemical viewpoint should be called preposterous, absurd, or paradoxical because its inexplicable action defies all scientific rules --- that it marks the intersection where alchemical science strays from chemical science. Applied to other bodies, it provides, in the same conditions, just so many unpredicted results and so many substances endowed with surprising qualities. This unique and powerful means thus allows a development of an unsuspected scope by the multiple, new, simple elements and compounds derived from the same elements, but whose genesis remains an enigma for the chemical rationale. This evidently should not be taught. If we have entered this reserved domain of hermetics, if, bolder than our predecessors, we have mentioned it, it is because we wanted to show: (1) that alchemy is a true science likely, just like chemistry, to develop and progress, and not be the empirical acquisition of a manufacturing secret of precious metals; (2) that alchemy and chemistry are two positive, exact, and real sciences, although different from each other as much in practice as in theory; (3) that, for these very reasons, chemistry could not claim an alchemical origin; (4) finally, that in the innumerable, more or less marvelous properties attributed in the lump by philosophers to the sole philosophers' stone all belong to the unknown substances obtained from chemical materials and bodies but treated according to the secret technique of our magistry.

It is not for us to teach what is the artifice used for the production of the philosophical mercury. To our great regret and in spite of all the solicitude we feel for the Sons of Science, we must imitate the example of the sages who deemed it wise to hold the remarkable word. We will be content to say that the second mercury or next matter of the Work is the result of the reactions of two bodies --- one fixed, the other volatile. The first, veiled under the epithet of philosophical gold is by no means common gold; the second is our living water already described under the name of common mercury. Through the dissolution of the metallic body with the help of the living water the artist enters into possession of the humid radical of metals, their seed, permanent water or salt of wisdom, essential principle, quintessence of the dissolved metal. This solution, performed according to the rules of the art, with all the required dispositions and conditions, is quite removed from analogous chemical operations. It is not a bit like it. Apart from the length of time and the knowledge of the appropriate means it demands many difficult repetitions. It is a fastidious work. Philalethes ⁽¹⁵⁾ himself claims it when he says: "We who have worked and who know the operation certainly know that there is no more boring work than the one for our first preparation" ⁽¹⁶⁾. For that reason Morienus warns King Calid that many Sages often complained about the boredom that this particular Work caused them. This caused the famous author of the Secret Hermetique to say that the

work required for the first operation was a work of Hercules. We should follow here the excellent advice of the *Triomphe Hermetique* and "not be afraid to often drench the earth with its own water and to dry it up as many times". Through repeated lixivations or Flamel's laveures or fire purifications, through frequent and renewed immersions, one progressively extracts the viscous, oily, and pure humidity of the metal, "in which, affirms Limojon de Saint-Didier, lies the energy and the greatest efficacy of the philosophical mercury". The living water "more celestial than terrestrial", acting on the heavy matter breaks its cohesion, mollifies it, renders it progressively soluble, attached itself only to the pure parts of the disintegrated mass, abandons the other to the pure parts of the disintegrated mass, abandons the others and rises to the surface, dragging along what it could grasp that conformed to its own fiery and spiritual nature. This important characteristic of the ascension of the subtle by the separation of the coarse gained the operation of mercury of the sages the name of sublimation ⁽¹⁷⁾. Our solvent, all spirit, plays the symbolic role of the eagle taking away its prey and this is the reason why Philalethes, the Cosmopolite, Cyliani, d'Espagnet, and several others advise to let it fly away, emphasizing the need to make it fly. For the spirit rises and the matter precipitates. What is cream if not the best part of milk? Now Basil Valentine teaches that, "If the philosophers' stone is made in the same manner that villagers make butter", by churning or shaking the cream which represents, in this similarity, our philosophical mercury. Therefore all the awareness of the artist must be focused on the extraction of the mercury which is collected on the surface of the dissolved compound by creaming the viscous and metallic unctuousness as it is being produced. This is moreover what the two characters of the *Mutus Liber* ⁽¹⁸⁾ represent, where the woman can be seen skimming with a spoon the foam from the liquid contained in an earthen pot that her husband is holding within her reach. "Such is", writes Philalethes, "the nature of our operation and such is our entire philosophy". Hermes, indicating the basic and fixed matter by the solar hieroglyph and its solvent by the lunar symbol, explains it in few words: "The sun", he says, "is its father and the moon its mother". We also understand the secret meaning contained in the words from the same author: "The wind bore it in its belly". Wind or air are names pertaining to living water which, in the fire, its volatility causes to vanish without any residues. Since this water --- our hermetic moon --- penetrates the fixed nature of the philosophical sun, which it holds back, assembling its most noble particles, the philosopher is right to affirm that the wind is the matrix of our mercury, quintessence of the gold of the sages and pure mineral seed: "He who has mollified the dry Sun", said Henckel ⁽¹⁹⁾, "by means of the wet moon to the extent that one has become similar to the other and that they remain united, has found the holy water which flows in the Garden of the Hesperides".

Thus is accomplished the first part of the axiom: *solve et coagula*, by the constant volatilization of the fixed and by its combination with the volatile; the body spiritualized itself and the metallic soul, leaving behind its stained garment, takes on another, even more precious, to which the ancient masters gave the name of philosophical mercury. It is the water of the two champions of Basil Valentine, whose manufacture is taught by the engraving of his second key. One of these bears an eagle on his sword (the fixed body); the other hides a caduceus (the solvent) behind its back. The lower part of the drawing is entirely taken up by two great spread wings, while in the center standing between the two combatants, appears the god Mercury as a totally naked, crowned adolescent holding a caduceus in each hand. The symbolism of this figure is easily penetrated. The large wings, which serve as boarded floor for the fencers, indicate the goal of the operation, namely the volatilization of the pure parts of the fixed element. The eagle indicates how to proceed, and the caduceus points out the one who must attack the adversary, our dissolving mercury. As for the mythological youth, his nakedness translates the complete stripping of the impure part, and the crown, the sign of his nobility. Finally he symbolizes with his two caducei, the mercury duplex, epithet that some

Adepts have substituted to that of philosophical mercury or common mercury, our living and dissolving water ⁽²⁰⁾. It is the mercury duplex that is represented on the fireplace of Terre-Neuve, by the symbolic human head which holds between its teeth the small cord of the emblem-filled shield. The animal expression of the fiery-eyed mask, its energetic physiognomy devoured with appetites render us responsive to the vital power, the generating activity, all the power of production our mercury has received from the mutual collaboration of nature and art. We have seen that it is collected on the surface of the water of which it occupies the highest area; this drove Louis d'Estissac to have its image positioned at the top of the decorative panel. As for the bucrane sculpted in the same axis but at the bottom of the composition, it indicates the foul and coarse *caput mortuum*, the impure, inert, and sterile cursed earth of the body, that the action of the solvent separates, rejects, precipitates as a useless and valueless residue. Philosophers have translated the union of the fixed and the volatile, of the body and the spirit as the image of the serpent which devours its tail, The Uroboros of the Greek alchemists ([*230-1], *oura*, tail, and [*230-2], *boros*, devouring), reduced to its simplest expression, thus takes on the circular form, symbolic drawing of the infinite, eternity as well as perfection. It is the central circle of mercury of the graphic notation, and we notice the same on the bas-relief we are studying, but ornamented with leaves and fruit to signify vegetative abilities and productive power. Furthermore, the sign is complete in spite of the care our Adept took to disguise it. If we examine it carefully, we will indeed see that the crown bears on its upper curve two spirated growths and on the lower curve, the cross figured by the horns and the frontal axis of the bucrane, complements of the circle in the astronomical sign of the planet Mercury.

All that is left for us to do is to dissect the central shield that we saw --- as we have noticed --- being carried by the human head (therefore under its domination), image of the philosophical mercury towering above the various motifs of the panel. This relationship between the mask and shield fairly demonstrates the essential role played by the hermetic matter in the cabalistic presentation of these singular coats of arms. The mysterious graphic signs express the entire philosophical labor in a nutshell, using, rather than old forms borrowed from flora or fauna, graphic notation figures. This paradigm constitutes thus an authentic alchemical formula. Let us first call attention to three stars, characteristic feature of the three stages of the Work, or preferably of the three successive states of the same substance. The first of these asterisks, isolated in the lower third of the shield, indicates our first mercury or the living water, whose composition has been taught to us by the two stephanophore gnomes. By dissolving philosophical gold which nothing indicates here or elsewhere ⁽²¹⁾, we obtain philosophical mercury composed of the fixed and volatile, not yet radically united, but able to coagulate. The second mercury is expressed by the two interlaced Cs of the point, an acknowledged alchemical symbol for the alembic. Our mercury is, we know it, the alembic of the sages, whose inflated round bottom and helmet represent the two spiritualized and assembled elements. Only with philosophical mercury do the sages undertake this long labor made up of numerous operations ⁽²²⁾, which they called coction or maturation. Our compound, subjected to the slow and continuous action of heat, distills, condenses, arise, goes down, swells, impastes, contracts, diminishes in volume, and acting principle of its own cohobations, progressively acquires a solid consistency. Thus raised by one gradation, this mercury, having become fixed by familiarization with fire, again needs to be dissolved by the first water, hidden here under the sign I, followed by the letter M, namely Spirit of Magnesia, another name for solvent. In alchemical notation, any cross bar, whatever its direction, is the conventional graphic signature for the spirit, a fact worth remembering, should one desire to uncover what body is hidden under the epithet of philosophical gold, father of mercury, and sun of the Work ⁽²³⁾. The capital letter M serves to identify our magnesia of which it is in fact the first letter. This second liquefaction of the coagulated body is intended to increase it, and

to fortify it by feeding it with the mercurial milk to which it owes being, life, and vegetative power. It becomes volatile a second time, but regains, in contact with the heat, the dry and hard consistency which it had previously acquired. We finally arrive at the top of the ascender of the strange graphic, whose shape reminds us of the number 4, but which in reality figures the path, the way which we must follow, Having reached this point, a third solution, similar to the first two, brings us, still on the straight path, from the regimen to the linear way of fire, to the second star, seal of the perfect and coagulated matter which it is sufficient to cook, continuing up to the required gradations without ever straying from this linear path which is completed by the cross bar of spirit, fire or incombustible sulphur. Such is the passionately desired sign of the stone or medicine of the first order. As for the blooming branch of a star, as an outwork, it demonstrates that by repeating the same technique the stone can be multiplied in quantity and quality owing to the exceptional fecundity it has received from nature and art. As its exuberant fertility comes from the primitive and celestial water which gives metallic sulphur activity and movement in exchange for its coagulating virtue, it becomes clear that the stone only differs from philosophical mercury in perfection rather than in substance. The sages are therefore right to teach that "the stone of the philosophers, or our mercury, and the philosophers' stone are one and the same thing, of one and the same kind", although one is more mature and more excellent than the other. Relative to this mercury, which is also the salt of the sages and the corner stone of the Work, we quote an excerpt from Khunrath ⁽²⁴⁾, quite clear in spite of its very pompous style and the abuse of parenthetical sentences. "The Stone of the Philosophers", says our author, is Ruach Elohim (which rested -- - *incubebat* --- on the waters [Gen. I], conceived by the mediation of heaven, (God alone, through his pure goodness, thus wanted it), made true boy and falling under the influence of senses, in the virginal uterus of the major primogenerated world, of the created chaos, that is, the earth, empty and inane, and water; it is the son born in the light of the Macrocosm, of vile appearance (in the eyes of the ignorant), deformed and almost insignificant; however consubstantial with, and similar to, its author (*parens*) little World (do not fancy that we actually mean man or anything from or by him) catholic, three in one, hermaphrodite, visible, sensible to the touch, hearing, olfaction, taste, local and finite, self-generatingly self-manifested, and by means of the obstetrical hands of the art of physico-chemistry, glorified in its body the moment it ascends; it can be used to almost infinite conveniences or usages and is marvelously salutary to the microcosm and the macrocosm in the catholic trinity. O thou, Son of Perdition, assuredly leave the quicksilver ([*232-2]--- *ydragyron*) and all things with it, whatever they may be, which have been prepared by thee as if elixirs. Thou art the type of the sinner, not of the Saviour. Thou can and must be delivered, and thou cannot deliver. Thou art the figure of the mediator who leads into error, ruin and death and not that of he who is good and rules truth, growth and life. He has ruled, rules and shall naturally and universally rule over all natural things. He is the catholic son of nature, the salt (know it) of saturn, fusible according to its peculiar constitution, permanent everywhere and always in nature by itself; and universal by its origin and virtue. Listen and be attentive: this salt is the very ancient stone. It is a mystery! Whose kernel (nucleus) is in the decimal. Like the child Horus, remain silent! May whoever understands understand. I have spoken. The Salt of Wisdom, not without serious cause, has been adorned by the Wise Man with many nicknames; they have said nothing was more useful in this world, besides it and the sun. Study this!

Before going further, we will take the liberty to pass a remark of some importance to our brothers and to men of good will. For it is our intention to provide here the complement to that which we have taught in a former book ⁽²⁵⁾. The most vested about traditional cabala, among ourselves, have probably been struck by the relation existing between the way, the path drawn by the hieroglyph which borrows the shape of the number 4, and the mineral antimony or stibium, clearly signified by this topographic word. The Greeks called native

antimony oxysulphide: [*233-1] (*stimmi*), or [*233-2] (*stibia*) means the path, the way which the investigator ([*233-3] --- *stibeus*) or pilgrim travels on during his voyage; it is the path he tramples underfoot ([*233-4] --- *steibo*). These considerations, based upon an exact correspondence of words have not escaped the old masters or modern philosophers, who, backing them up with their authority, have contributed to this spread of unfortunate error, that common antimony was the mysterious subject of the art. Unfortunate misunderstanding, invincible obstacle against which hundreds of seekers have run. From Artephius, who begins his treatise ⁽²⁶⁾ with these words: "Antimony comes from parts of Saturn", all the way to Philalethes, who entitles one of his works: *Experiments on the Preparation of Philosophical Mercury through the Stellated and Silvery Martial Regulus of Antimony*, not forgetting Basil Valentine's work: *The Triumphal Chariot of Antimony*, and Batsdorff's assertion dangerous because of his hypocritical positivism: the number of those who have let themselves be caught in this crude trap is simply prodigious. The Middle Ages saw puffers and alchemists volatilize, without any results, tons of mercury amalgamated with stibiated gold. In the 18th century the learned chemist Jean-Frederick Henckel ⁽²⁷⁾ admits in this *Treatise of Appropriation* that, for a long time, he devoted himself to these costly and useless experiments. "Regulus of antimony", he says, "is regarded as a means to unite mercury to metals; here is the reason why, the regulus is no longer mercury and it is not yet a perfect metal; it has ceased to be one and has begun to become the other. However, I could not pass over the fact in silence that I uselessly worked, quite hard, to unite gold and mercury more intimately by means of regulus of antimony". And who knows if some good artists are still today following the deplorable example of the medieval spagyrist? Alas! Each one has his idiosyncrasy, each one is attached to his idea and whatever we may say will not prevail against such a tenacious prejudice. All the same, our duty being above all to help those who do not indulge in idle dreams and fantasy, we will write for those only without worrying about the others. Let us then recall that another similarity of words would allow us to infer that the philosophers' stone could come from antimony. It is known that alchemists of the 14th century called their universal medicine *Kohl* or *Kohol*, from the Arabic words *al cohool*, meaning subtle powder, words which later took on in our language the meaning of spirits (of alcohol). It is said that in Arabic *Kohl* is the pulverized antimony oxysulfide with which Muslim women used to dye their eyebrows black. Greek women used the same product which was called: [*234-1] (*platnophthalmou*), large eye, because by using this artifice their eyes appear larger (Greek root [*234-2] --- *platus*, large, and [*234-3] --- *ophthalmos*, eye). Here are, one might think, suggestive relationships. We could certainly agree if we did not know that not the slightest molecule of stibnite is a part of the platyophthalmon of the Greeks (sublimed mercury sulfide), the *Kohl* of the Arabs and the *Cohol* or *Cohel* of the Turks. The last two, as a matter of fact, were obtained by the calcinations of a mixture of granulated tin and gall nuts. Such is the chemical composition of the *Kohl* of oriental women, used by the ancient alchemists as a term of comparison to teach the secret preparation of their antimony. It is the solar eye Egyptians called oudja, which also figure among the Masonic emblems, surrounded by a halo, in the center of a triangle ⁽²⁸⁾. This symbol offers the same meaning as the letter G, seventh of the alphabet, initial of the common name of the Subject of the sages, represented in the middle of a radiating star [N.B. --- gold, gur, galena, graphite, gabbro, granite, gypsum, gneiss, garnet]. This matter is Artephius' Saturnine Antimony, Tollius' regulus of antimony, and the true and only stibium of Michael Maier and all the Adepts. As for mineral stibnite, it possesses none of the required qualities, and whatever the manner in which we want to treat it, neither the secret solvent nor the philosophical mercury will ever be obtained from it. If Basil Valentine gives philosophical mercury the nickname of pilgrim or traveler ([*235-1] --- *stibeus*) ⁽²⁹⁾, because it must, says he, go through six celestial cities before fixing its residence in the seventh; if Philalethes affirms it is our only path ([*235-2] --- *stibia*), this is not sufficient to invoke that these masters claimed to designate common

antimony as the regenerator of philosophical mercury. This substance is too far from perfection, from purity, and the acquired spirituality of the humid root or metallic seed --- which one could anyway not find on earth --- to be genuinely useful to us. The antimony of the sages, raw matter directly extracted from the mine, "is not properly mineral, and even less metallic as Philalethes ⁽³⁰⁾ teaches us; but without partaking of these two substances it is something between one and the other. It is not corporeal however, because it is entirely volatile; it is not spirit because it liquefies like metal in fire. It is therefore a chaos which stands in stead of mother to all metals". It is the metallic and mineral flower ([*235-3] --- *antheon*), the first rose, black in truth, which has remained down here as a part of the elementary chaos. From it, from this flower of flowers (*flos florum*) we first draw our frost ([*235-4] --- *stibe*) which is the spirit moving on the surface of the waters and the white ornament of the angels; reduced to this bright whiteness, it is the mirror of the art, the torch ([*235-5] --- *stilbe*), the lamp or lantern ⁽³¹⁾, the brightness of stars and splendor of the sun (*splendor solis*); still, united to philosophical gold, it becomes the metallic planet Mercury ([*235-6] --- *stilbonaster*), the nest of the bird ([*235-7] --- *stibas*), our Phoenix and its small stone ([*235-8] --- *stia*); finally it is the root, subject, or pivot (Latin, *stipes*, *stirps*) of the Great Work and not common antimony. Know then, brothers, so as to no longer err, that our term of antimony, derived from the Greek [*235-9] --- *antemon*, designates through a pun familiar to philosophers, the ane-Timon ⁽³²⁾, the guide which in the Bible leads the Jews to the Fountain. It is the mythical Aliboron, [*236-1], horse of the sun. One more word. You probably know that in primitive language, Greek cabalists used to substitute numbers for certain consonants, for words whose common meaning they wanted to veil under a hermetic meaning. And so they used the epistimon ([*236-2]--- *stagion*)⁽³³⁾, *Koppa*, *sampi*, *digamma* ⁽³⁴⁾, to which they granted a conventional value. The names modified by this process formed genuine cryptograms, although their form and their pronunciation did not seem to have undergone any alteration. Furthermore, the word, antimony, [*236-3], *stimmi*, when it was used to signify the hermetic subject, was always written with the episemon ([*236-4], equivalent of the consonants sigma and tau together. Written in this manner [*236-5] --- *simmi*, it is no longer the stibnite of mineralogists, but indeed a matter signed by nature, or still better, a movement, a dynamism, or a vibration, a sealed life ([*236-6 --- *simenai*) so as to allow a man to identify it, a very peculiar signature submitted to the rules of the number six. In addition, a close term frequently used in phonetic cabala for assonance, the word [*236-7] --- epistemon indicates one who knows, one who is informed of, one who is skilled at. In Rabelais' book *Pantagruel*, one of the main characters, the man of science, is called Epistemon. He is the secret artisan, the spirit, the mind enclosed in raw substance as translated by the Greek epistemon, because the spirit can single-handedly perform and perfect the entire work without any other help apart from elementary fire.

It would be easy for us to complete what we have said about the philosophical mercury and its preparation, but it is not up to us to entirely unveil this important secret. The written teachings should never go beyond that which the proselytes received once upon a time in the lesser Mysteries of Agra. And if we willingly yield to the difficult task of the ancient Hydranos, on the other hand, the esoteric domain of the Great Eleusian Mysteries is absolutely forbidden to us. Because before they receive the supreme initiation, the Greek mystes swore on their life and in the presence of the Hierophant to never reveal anything of the truths which would be entrusted to them. We do not speak here to some trustworthy and tested disciples in the shadow of a closed sanctuary before the divine image of the venerable Ceres --- black stone imported from Pessinonte --- or o the sacred Isis, seated on the cubic block; we discourse at the threshold of a temple under the peristyle and in front of the crowd without exacting a preliminary oath from our listeners. Confronted with such adverse circumstances, how could one be surprised to see us demonstrate prudence and circumspection? True, we deplore the

fact that the initiatory institutions of Antiquity have forever disappeared and that a narrow exotericism serves as a substitute for the open spirit of the Mysteries of yesteryears; for we believe, along with the philosopher ⁽³⁵⁾, "that it is more worthy of human nature and more instructive to first admit the marvelous by trying to extract from it what is true than to first treat it as a lie or to canonize it as a miracle to avoid explaining it". These are useless regrets. Time, which destroys everything, has made a clean sweep of ancient civilization. What remains of them today besides the historical testimony of their greatness and power, memories buried in the depth of papyri or piously exhumed from arid lands, peopled with moving ruins? Alas! The last Mystagogues have taken their secret with them; and only to God, Father of Light and dispenser of all truths, can we appeal for the grace of higher revelations. We take the liberty to give advice to sincere investigators, to the sons of science, on whose behalf we are writing. Only divine illumination will bring them the solution of the obscure problem: where and how to obtain this mysterious gold, unknown body, capable of animating and fertilizing water, first element of metallic nature? The ideographic sculptures of Louis d'Estissac stand mute about this essential point; but our duty being oriented toward respecting the will of the Adepts, we shall limit our concern to report the obstacle by replacing it in the context of practical work.

Before we examine the upper motifs, we must still say a word about the central shield, filled with hieroglyphs, which we have just analyzed. The monograph quoted from the castle of Terre-Neuve which we think was written by the late Monsieur Rochebrune, holds a rather peculiar passage concerning these symbols. The author after a brief description of the fireplace adds: "It is one of the beautiful works of stone executed by the decorators of Louis d'Estissac. The shield placed under that of the Lord of this beautiful castle is decorated in its center with the monogram of the master image carver; it is surmounted with a four, symbolic number, almost always coupled with all monograms of artists, engravers, printers, or glass-painters, etc. We are looking for the key to this curious sign of the guilds". Here is in truth, a rather surprising thesis. It is possible that its author occasionally encountered an initial in the form of a four used to classify or identify certain works of art. As for us who have noticed it on many curious objects of clearly hermetic characteristic --- engravings, stained glass windows, enameled objects, goldsmith's works, etc. --- we cannot admit that this number might constitute a sign of the guilds. It does not belong to any of the coats of arms of the corporation because in this case they would have to show the tools and insignias specific to the given corporations. In the same way this blazon cannot be classified in the category of revealing arms or that of marks of nobility, since the latter do not obey the heraldic rules and since the former are deprived of image meaning, characteristic of visual riddles. On the other hand, we know pertinently that the artists entrusted by Louis d'Estissac with the decoration of his dwelling are totally forgotten; their names have not been preserved. Could this gap authorize the hypothesis of the personal mark of an artist while the same characters have a very precise meaning are often found in alchemical formulas? Further, how can we explain the indifference of the learned symbolist scientist, the Adept of Coulonges, before his work, when, himself content with a very modest shield, he abandons a field more spacious than his own to the whims of his artisans? And what reason would allow the organizer, the creator of such a harmonious hermetic paradigm, so consistent with pure doctrine, in its smallest details, to tolerate the addition of foreign hieroglyphics if the latter were to be in glaring disagreement with the rest of the work? We conclude that the hypothesis of any guild's sign cannot be supported. There is no example where the thought of an artwork is concentrated in the very signature of the artisan although this is the error made by a defective interpretation of the analogy.

(1) The Greek word [*218-1 (*gnoma*), phonetic equivalent to the French word *gnome*, means clue, which is used to make a thing known, to classify it, to identify it. It is its distinctive sign. [*218-2] (*gnomon*) is also the sign indicating the movement of the sun, the hand of sundials and our *gnome*. Meditate upon this; an important secret is hidden beneath this *cabala*.

(2) *Clef du Grand Oeuvre ou Lettres du Sancelrien Tourangeau (Key to the Great Work, or Letters from the Author from Touraine)*; Paris, Cailleau, 1777, p. 65.

(3) *Le Livre des Figures Hieroglyphiques (The Book of Hieroglyphic Figures)* by Nicolas Flamel; in *Trois Traitez de la Philosophie Naturelle (Three Treatises of Natural Philosophy)*; Paris, G. Marette, 1612.

(4) This woman says of herself in the *Song of Songs*, ch. 1:5, "I am black but I am beautiful".

(5) Longin, in the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, plays the same role as St Michael and St George; Cadmos, Perseus, Jason make a similar gesture among the pagans. He pierces with a blow of his lance the side of Christ just as the celestial knights and the Greek heroes pierce the dragon. This is a symbolic act whose positive application to hermetic labor is pregnant with fortunate consequences.

(6) This esoteric truth is wonderfully expressed in the Hymn of the Christian Church:
The sun is hidden beneath the star,
The Orient in the setting sun;
The artisan is hidden in the work;
And through the help of grace,
He is given back and brought back
To his country.

(7) Fr. Noel: *Dictionnaire de la Fable ou Mythologie Greque, Latine, Egyptienne, Celtique, Persanne, etc. (Dictionary of the Fable or Greek, Latin, Egyptian, Celtic, Persian, Mythology)*; Paris, Le Normant, 1801.

(8) According to the Armenian version of the *Gospel of Childhood*, translated by Paul Peeters, Jesus during his sojourn in Egypt renews in the presence of children of his age the miracle of Moses: "And Jesus, having gotten up, stood among them and with a stick he struck the rock and at the same time a spring of abundant and delicious water sprung from this rock and he gave it to them all to drink. This spring still exists today".

(9) Translator's Note: A snake and a dragon which devour each other.

(10) *Introitus apertus ad oclusum Regis palatium*, Op. cit., chap. IV, I.

(11) *Le Triomphe Hermetique*, p. 71.

(12) This key was given to the neophytes in the ceremony of the Crater ([*225-1], *kraterizo* --- root, [*225-2], *krater*, great cup, or fountain basin), which consecrated the first initiation in the mysteries of the Dionysiac cult.

(13) *Comment l'Esprit vient aux tables (How the Spirit Came to Tables)*, by a man who has not lost his mind; Paris, New Library, 1854.

(14) *Le Grand et Excellent Oeuvre des Sages (The Great and Excellent Work of the Sages)* by Jacques Le Tesson; *Second Dialogue du Lyon Verd (Second Dialogue of the Green Lion)*, Ch. VI, ms. 17th century, Library of Lyon, # 971.

(15) *Introitus apertus...*; Ch. VIII, 3, 4.

(16) We can see that the Adept s speaking of the preparation of the philosophical Mercury as if it were the first of all; he purposefully omits the one which procures the universal solvent. He assumes it is known and realized. He is actually describing the first operation of the second work. This is a commonly occurring philosophical artifice against we want to warn the disciples of Hermes.

(17) "You will separate earth from fire subtle from heavy, slowly with a lot of labor"; Hermes Trismegistus in the *Emerald Tablet*.

(18) *Mutus Liber*; see also *Alchimie* by Canseliet, published by J.-J. Pauvert, p. 40 et seq.

(19) J.F. Hecnel: *Flora Saturnisans*; Paris, J.-T. Herissant, 1760, Ch. IV, p. 78.

(20) In the *Twelve Keys of Philosophy* by Basil Valentine, cf. above.

(21) "You must know that this solution and separation has never been described by any of the ancient Sage Philosophers who have lived before me and who have known this Magistry. And if they have spoken of it, it has been only through enigmas and symbols and not in an open fashion". Basil Valentine, *Testamentum*.

(22) The artists who believed that the third work to complete with a continuous coction requiring no other help but a specific fire of equal and constant temperature were badly mistaken. The true coction is not accomplished in such a manner, and it is the last stumbling block against which those who stumble, who after long and painful efforts, have finally taken possession of the philosophical mercury. A useful note can correct them: the colors are not the work of fire. They appear only by the will of the artist; they can only be observed through the glass, that is in each coagulation stage. But will you be able to fully understand me?

(23) The father of the Greek Hermes was Zeus, the master God. And [*231-1] (*Zeus*) is close to [*231-2] (*Zeuxis*), a word which marks the action of joining, uniting, assembling, marrying.

(24) Henri Khunrath: *Ampitheatre de l'eternelle sapience*; Paris, Chacornac, 1900, p. 156.

(25) Fulcanelli: *Le Mystere des Cathedrales (The Mystery of the Cathedrals)*; Paris, J. Schemit, 1926.

(26) *Le Livre Secret du Tres-Ancien Philosophe Artephius (The Secret Book of the Very Ancient Philosopher Artephius)* in *Trois Traitez de la Philosophie Naturelle*; Paris, G. Marette, 1612.

(27) J.F. Henckel: *Opuscules Mineralogiques*, ch. III, p. 404; Paris, Herissant, 1760.

(28) Translator's Note: As seen on the American one dollar bill.

(29) Old engravings bearing the inscription *Icon peregrini* (icon of the travelers) represent hermetic Mercury in the image of a pilgrim climbing a sharp and rocky path in a place filled with rocks and precipices. Wearing a large flat hat he leans with one hand on a stick and holds in the other a shield where are represented the sun and three stars. Sometimes young, alert, and well dressed; sometimes old, tired, and miserable, he is always followed by a faithful dog which seems to share his good or his bad fortune.

(30) *Introitus apertus...*, Ch. II, 2.

(31) A pen and ink drawing made by the Adept Lintaut, in his manuscript called *L'Aurore (Dawn)* (Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, # 3020, 17th century), shows us the soul of a crowned king lying down, inert, on a large stone slab, rising in the shape of a winged child towards a lantern suspended in the midst of dark clouds. We also mention here for hermeticists what Rabelais said about the trip to the land of the Lantern People, the Lanternois, which he had the heroes of his *Pantagruel* accomplish.

(32) Translator's Note: The antimony which sounds like antimony and also in French like Ane Timon or the donkey (named Timon, also the donkey bearing the beam of a plough).

(33) Translator's Note: Episimon is like the sigma at the end of the word. The numerical value is 6.

(34) Translator's Note: Letters in ancient Greek to which letters were attributed.

(35) *Comment l'Esprit vient aux Tables*, op. cit., p. 25.

LOUIS D'ESTISSAC V

A Latin inscription covering the entire width of the entablature can be read above the symbolic panels which were up to now the subject of our study. It is composed of three words separated one from the other two pyrogenous vases forming the following epigraph:

NASCENDO QUOTIDIE MORIMUR ⁽¹⁾

In being born, we die every day. A serious thought of Seneca, the philosopher, an axiom which we would hardly expect to find here. Evidently, this profound albeit ethical truth, seems conflicting and without direct relation to the surrounding symbolism. In the midst of hermetic emblems what value could be attributed to the severe exhortation, to have to meditate on the unfortunate fate that life has in store for us, on the implacable destiny which imposes death on humanity as the real goal of existence, the walk to the sepulcher as the essential condition of the earthly sojourn, the coffin as the *raison d'être* for the crib? Could it be simply to remind us --- salutary distraction --- that is useful to keep in mind the image of supreme anxieties and uncertainties, the fear of the troubling Unknown, necessary bridles to our passions and our aberration? Or else, by incidentally provoking here an awakening of our consciousness inviting us to ponder, to confront that which we fear most, did the learned organizer of the building want to persuade us of the vanity of our desires, of our hopes, of the uselessness of our efforts, of the emptiness of our illusions? --- We do not believe so. For, as expressive, as rigorous, as the literal meaning of the epigraph might be for the average man, it is certain that we must uncover another one, adequate and conforming to the esotericism of this masterly work. We think, in fact, that the Latin axiom borrowed by Louis d'Estissac from Nero's stoical governor, was not inappropriately put there. It is the only written word written in the *Mutus Liber*. There is no doubt of its significance and that it was placed there on purpose to teach what the image could not translate. A simple examination of the inscription shows that of the three terms which contribute to form it, two are preceded by a special sign, the words *quotidie* and *morimur*. This sign, a little lozenge, was called by the Greeks [*240-1] (*rombos*) from [*240-2] (*rembo*) to be mistaken, to go astray, to turn around. A deceptive meaning likely to lead astray, to turn around. A deceptive meaning likely to lead us astray, is very clearly indicated. Two signs were used to emphasize two meanings, ([*240-3] --- *amphibolos*) in that diplomatic sentence. The same character engraved before *quotidie* and *morimur* testifies that these words remain invariable and retain their ordinary meaning. *Nascendo*, on the contrary, deprived of any clue, contains another meaning. By using it as a gerund it invokes without spelling modification, the idea of production, of generation. We should no longer read *being born*, but rather *in order to produce* or *in order to generate*. Thus the mystery, free from its matrix, gives away the hidden reason for the amphibological axiom. And the superficial formula, reminding man of his mortal origin is erased and disappears, now symbolism figuratively addresses the reader and teaches him: *in order to produce we die every day*. The parents of the hermetic child speak. Their language is true; they actually die together not only to give it being, but also to ensure the growth and multiplication of the stone. The child is born from their death and feeds on their corpses. We see how the alchemical meaning proves to be quite expressive and enlightening. Therefore Limojon de Saint-Didier states a primordial truth when he affirms: "The stone of the philosophers is born from the destruction of two bodies". We add that the philosophers' stone --- or our mercury, its next matter --- is also born from the fight, the mortification, and the ruin of two opposite natures. Thus in the essential operations of the art we always have two principles producing a third one and the generation depends upon a preliminary decomposition of its agents.

Furthermore, philosophical mercury itself, sole substance of the Magistry can never yield anything unless it dies, ferments, and putrefies at the end of the first stage of the Work. Finally, whether it is a matter of obtaining the sulphur, the Elixir, or the Medicine, we cannot transform one or the other, whether in power or quantity as long as we have not made them resume their mercurial state, next to the original rebis and as such directed toward corruption. For there is a fundamental law in hermetics expressed by the old adage: *Corruptio unius est generatio alterius* ⁽²⁾. Huginus a Barma tells us, in the chapter about Hermetic Positions ⁽³⁾ that: "Whoever does not know the means of destroying the bodies does not know wither the means of producing them". Elsewhere the same author teaches that "if the mercury is not tinted it will not tinct". And the philosophers' mercury opens with the color black, seal of its mortification, the chromatic series of the philosophical spectrum. It is its first tincture and it is also the first favorable clue of the technique, harbinger of success, which sanctions the artisan's mastery. "Indeed", writes Nicolas Flamel in the *Book of Hieroglyphic Figures*, "whoever does not see this blackness at the beginning of his operation, during the days of the stone, whatever other colors he may see, he is totally failing the magistry and he can no longer perfect it with this chaos. For he is not working well of he is not putrefying; all the more because if consequently the stone cannot take on a vegetative life to grow and multiply". Further, the great Adept asserts that dissolving the compound and liquefying it under the influence of fire provokes the disintegration and liquefying it under the influence of fire provokes the disintegration of the assembled parts whose black parts whose black color is a sure proof. "Therefore", he says, "this blackness and color clearly teaches that in this beginning the matter and compound are beginning to rot and to dissolve the matter and compound are beginning to rot and to dissolve into a powder tinier than the atoms of the Sun, later transforming themselves into permanent water. Envious ⁽⁴⁾ philosophers call this dissolution death, destruction, and perdition, because the natures change forms, Whence came so many allegories about the dead, tombs, and sepulchers. Others have called it Calcination, Denudation, Separation, Trituration, Assation, because the compounds are changed and reduced into very small pieces and parts. Others, Reduction into the first matter, Mollification, Extraction, Commixtion, Liquefaction, Conversion of Elements, Subtiliation, Division, Hunation, Impastation, and Distillation because the compounds are liquefied, reduced to seed, mollified and circulated in a matrass, Others still, Xir, Putrefaction, Corruption, Cymmerian Shadows, Abbyss, Hell, Dragons, generation, Ingress, Submersion, Complexion, Conjunction, and Impregnation, because the matter is black and aqueous, the natures mix perfectly, and mutually keep the ones from the others". A certain number of authors --- Philalethes in particular --- demonstrated the necessity, the utility of death and of mineral putrefaction by using a simile drawn from wheatseed. They probably got the idea from the parable collected in St John's Gospel (12:24); the apostle therein transcribes these words of Christ: "Verily, I say unto you, if the grain of wheat does not die after it has been thrown into the earth, it remains alone, but when it is dead it bears much fruit".

We believe to have sufficiently developed the secret meaning of the epigraph: *Nascendo quotidie morimur*, and demonstrated how this classical axiom, skillfully used by Louis d'Estissac throws a new light on the lapidary work of the hermetic scientist.

(1) Morimur is an ancient form of Moriemur.

(2) The corruption of the one is the generation of the other.

(3) Huginus a Barma: *Le Regne de Saturne change en Siecle d'Or...*; Paris, P. Derieu, 1780.

(4) Translator's note: In the old meaning of sparring with their words.

LOUIS D'ESTISSAC VI

Of the symbolic fireplace, only the cornice is left to be discussed. It is divided into six oblong panels, ornamented with symmetrical motifs repeated two by two and it summarizes the essential points of experimentation.

Two kidney-shaped shields occupy the angles and their concave edge is stretched out in the shape of a shell. Their field displays the image of a medusa head with its snake hair, out of which two lightning bolts are flashing. These are the emblems of the initial matters, one ardent, igneous, figures by the Gorgon mask and its lightning bolts; the other, aqueous and cold, passive substance represented in the shape of a sea shell called Merelle by the philosophers, from the Greek [*243-1] (*meter*) and [*243-2] (*ele*), Mother of Light. The mutual reaction of these primary elements --- water and fire --- yield common mercury, of mixed quality, which is this igneous water or aqueous fire that we use as a solvent in the preparation of the philosophers' mercury.

After the shields, the bucranes indicate the two mortifications marking the beginning of the preliminary works: the first creates common mercury and the second gives birth to the hermetic rebis, These fleshless heads of the solar oxen stand for human skulls and crossed femurs, scattered bones or complete skeletons of alchemical iconography; like these they are called crow heads. It is the common epithet applied to decomposing matters, matters being corrupted, which are characterized in the philosophers' work by an oily, greasy appearance, a strong and disgusting odor, a viscous and sticky condition, a quicksilver-like consistency, a blue, violet or black coloration. You will notice the bandlets connecting the bucrane's horns; they are crossed in the shape of an X, divine attribute and first manifestation of light, previously diffuse in the darkness of mineral earth.

As for the philosophers' mercury, whose elaboration is never revealed, not even under the hieroglyphics veil, we find nonetheless its image on one of the decorative shields adjacent to the median acanthus. Two stars are engraved above the moon crescent, images of the mercury duplex or Rebis that coction first transforms into white, semi-fixed and fusible sulphur. Under the action of the elementary fire, the operation resumed and pursued, leads to the great final realizations, figures on the opposite shield by two roses. These, as we know, mark the result of the two, lesser and greater, magisteries, white Medicine and red Stone, whose fleur de lys below them, sanction the absolute truth. It is the sign of perfect knowledge, the emblem of Wisdom, the crown of the philosopher, the seal of Science and Faith united with the double spiritual and temporal power of Knighthood.

THE MAN OF THE WOODS

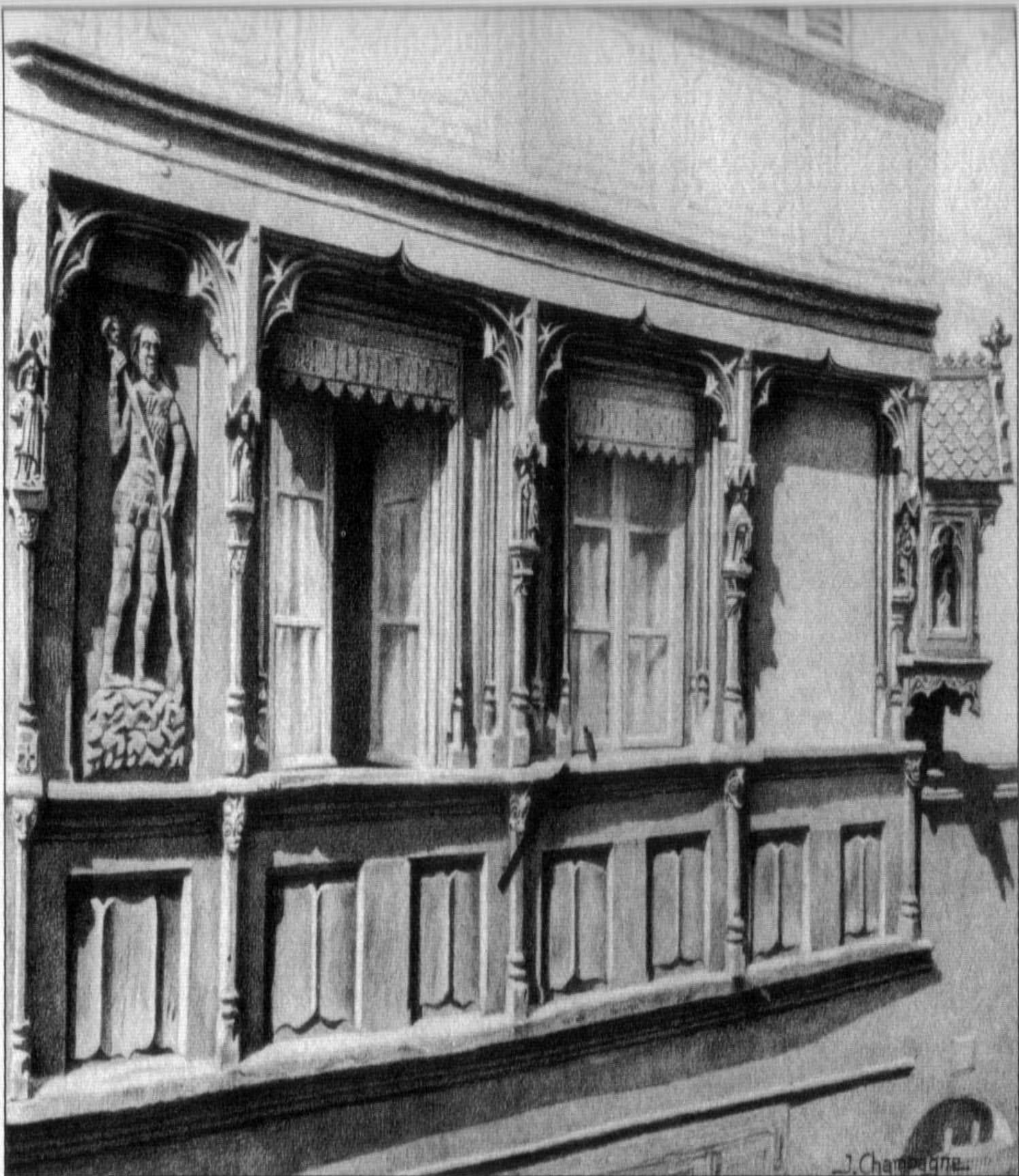
MYSTICAL HERALD OF THIERS

A picturesque county town of the Puy-le-Dome district, Thiers offers a remarkable and very elegant specimen of secular, 15th century architecture. It is the so-called house of the Man of the Woods, a noggin building, reduced today to the first and second floors only. Its surprising preservation makes it precious to art enthusiasts as well as to dilettantes of the Middle Ages (**Plate XVII**)

Four bays closed with ogee arches, with filleted and suspate ribs, open on the façade. Engaged little columns with capitals composed of grotesque masks which are covered with long-eared head-dresses, separate them from one another and support as many figurines sheltered under light, delicate, and perforated canopies. On the lower level, panels ornamented with parchments correspond to the upper bays, but the beveled pillars which form a perpendicular edge exhibit devouring snouts of dragons by means of capitals.

The main character which serves as a sign for this old dwelling is a character similar to the one we have seen maneuvering a stump, on the corner sorb tree pillar of the manor of Lisieux. Sculpted in the corresponding place with almost the same gestures, it seems to claim the same tradition. We know nothing of him except that it getting close to five centuries old and, since it has been built, generations of Thiers inhabitants have always seen him leaning against the panel of his old dwelling. This large but rather rudimentary wooden bas-relief with a naïve design whose age and weathering emphasize the harsh character, represents a tall hairy man, dressed with skins transversely sewn together, fur outside. Bare headed, he smiles, enigmatic, somewhat distant; he leans on a long stick which bears at its upper extremity the face of a hooded and quite ugly old woman. His bare feet bear on a lump formed of rough sinuosities which cannot be identified due to the coarseness of execution. Such is this man of the Woods called by a local chronicler the Sphinx of Thiers. "The local people", he writes, "are not concerned about his origins, his gesture, or his silence. They only know one thing about him, the name he bears in their memory, the wild and graceless name which they use to refer to him and which perpetuates his memory throughout the ages. Foreigners and tourists are more friendly and somewhat more curious. They stop before him as before an object of value. They examine at leisure the features of his physiognomy and anatomy. They smell a history full of local interest and perhaps of general interest. They question their guides. But these guides are as ignorant and perhaps as mute as the local guardians of this solitary figure. And he avenges himself on the ignorance of the ones and the stupidity of the others by keeping his secret".

People have wondered whether this image did not represent St Christopher facing the image of the Child-Jesus that would have occupied the opposite and empty panel of the façade. Beyond the fact that no one has any memory of the subject which once upon a time hid the nogging on the right --- if we even suppose that it might have existed --- one would still have to admit that the pedestal bearing our hermit must have represented waves. Nothing is less certain than such hypothesis. Indeed, how could we explain his miraculous position on the water --- on waters whose surface would be convex? Furthermore, the very absence of Jesus on the shoulder of the colossus justifies the exclusion of a possible resemblance with St Christopher. Even if we suppose that he could have incarnated Offerus --- first personality of



THIERS (PUY-DE-DÔME)
House of the Man of the Woods (15th Century)

PLATE XVII

the Christian Giant before his conversion --- still we could not give any satisfying reason for the monkey-like clothing which imprints its particular features on our sculpture. If the legend asserts that the man who took Jesus across had to unearth a tree so as to fight against the violence of the stream and the inexplicable heaviness of his divine burden, nowhere is it pointed out that this tree had any kind of effigy in it, any kind of distinctive mark. Now we know too well the high conscience, the scrupulous fidelity which medieval imagers conveyed to the translation of their subjects to accept an evaluation with such slight foundation.

The Man of the Woods, the result of a clearly thought-out intent, necessarily expresses a precise and powerful idea. We will agree that he could not have been created and placed there without purpose, and that, from this standpoint, the decorative concern seems only to intervene on a secondary level. In our opinion, what was meant to be asserted, what this bas-relief of Thiers clearly indicates, is that it designates the dwelling of an unknown alchemist. It officially stamps the ancient philosopher's dwelling and reveals its mystery. Its indisputable hermetic individuality is completed and further emphasized against the background of the other accompanying figures. If they have neither the caliber nor the expressive energy appropriate to the subject, the little actors of the Great Work are no less instructive to such an extent that it would be quite difficult to solve the enigma if we did not compare these symbolic characters among themselves. As for the correct meaning of the Man of the Woods, it is mostly focused on the old woman's head at the top of his rustic scepter. With a duenna face, her skull bound by a hood, such appears here in its plastic form, a version of our crazy Mother. With the name people used to designate --- in the times of the joyous parodies of the Donkey Festival --- the high dignitaries and masters of certain secret institutions. The Dijon Infantry or the Brotherhood of the Crazy Mother, a group of masked initiates, masked under Rabelaisian appearance and committing Pantagruel-like eccentricities is the last example of it. This mother of the insane, or crazy Mother is no other than the hermetic science itself, its body of knowledge considered as a whole. As science provides whoever embraces it and cultivates it with complete wisdom, consequently the tall insane man sculpted on the façade of the Thiers building is actually a wise man, as he leans on Sapience, dry tree and the scepter of the crazy Mother. This simple man with abundant, disheveled hair, and unkempt beard, this man of nature whose traditional knowledge leads him to despise the vain frivolity of the poor insane people who think they are wise, stands head and shoulders above other men, just as he stands above the mound of stones which he tramples underfoot ⁽¹⁾. He is the Enlightened one for he has received the light spiritual enlightenment. Behind a mask of detached serenity, he remains silent and protects his secret from conceited inquisitiveness and from the sterile activity of the histrionic play-actors of the human comedy. He, the silent one, represents for us the myste of Antiquity (in Greek [*251-1] --- *mustes*, head of the initiates) ⁽²⁾, Greek incarnation of the mystic or mysterious science ([*251-2] --- *musterion*, secret dogma, esotericism)(Plate XVIII).

The Man of the Woods reveals yet another function, apart from his esoteric one demonstrating what the alchemist should be: a learned man of simple spirit, an attentive investigator of nature, always attempting to imitate, just as the monkey imitates man ⁽³⁾. The other function completes the first one. For the insane man, humanized emblem of the children of Hermes, still evokes mercury itself, unique and proper matter of the sages. About this *artifex in opere* -- process in operation --- that the hymn of the Christian Church speak about, this artisan hidden in the center of the work, capable of doing everything with the external aid of the alchemist. This mercury or insane man who is the absolute master of the Work, the obscure and never lazy worker, the secret agent and faithful and loyal servant of the philosopher. This incessant collaboration of human foresight with natural activity, this duality of effort combined and directed toward the same goal is expressed by the great symbol of Thiers. As



THIERS (PUY-DE-DÔME)
The Man of the Woods

for the means through which the philosophers' mercury makes itself known and can be identified, we are now going to disclose it.

In an old almanac which, with the Clavicles of Solomon and the Secrets of the Great Albertus, constituted once upon a time the greater part of the scientific body ⁽⁴⁾ of colporteurs, an interesting woodcut is found among the plates illustrating the text. It represents a skeleton surrounded with images meant to mark out the planetary correspondences "with the parts of the body which are connected with it and under their rule". In the drawing, while the Sun exhibits its radiant face, and the Moon its profile crowned with a crescent, Mercury appears in the shape of a court jester. Head covered with the pilgrim's hood out of which prick up two long ears --- just as the capitals which we have pointed out at the basis of the figurines --- he is holding a caduceus instead of his jester's bauble. In order to avoid any misunderstanding, the artist cared to write the name of each planet under its proper sign. It is, therefore, a genuine symbolic formula, used in the middle ages for the esoteric translation of celestial Mercury and quicksilver of the sages. Moreover, it suffices to remember that the French word *sou* (once upon a time *fol*) --- meaning crazy --- comes from the Latin *follies*, bellows used to blow in fires, to awaken the idea of the puffer, derogatory epithet conferred on medieval spagyrist. Later still in the 17th century, it is not infrequent to encounter in the caricatures of Jacques Callot's rivals, grotesque figures drawn in the symbolic spirit whose philosophical manifestations we are now studying. We remember a drawing representing a seated buffoon, legs crossed and forming the sign X, and hiding behind his back a large bellows. We should not be surprised that court jesters, among whom several have remained famous, have a hermetic origin. Their multicolored costumes, their strange clothes --- they carried on their belt a bladder which they called a lantern ⁽⁵⁾ --- their puns, their mystifications prove it, along with the rare prerogative which they shared with philosophers, namely, to utter very bold truths with impunity. Finally, due to its fickleness and volatility, the mercury called the Crazy Man of the Great Work, has its meaning confirmed in the first card of the Tarot, called the Joker, the Magician or sometimes the Alchemist ⁽⁶⁾.

In addition, the Jester's bauble which is positively a rattle ([***-253-1] ---- *krotalon*) ⁽⁷⁾, amusement for toddlers and toy of all firstborns, is not different from the caduceus. The two attributes share an obvious analogy, although the court fool's bauble expresses, in addition, the inborn simplicity possessed by children and that science demands from sages. One and the other are similar images. Momos and Hermes carry the same instrument, revealing the sign of mercury. Draw a circle on the upper extremity of a vertical line, add two horns to the circle and you will have the graphic secret used by medieval alchemists to designate their mercurial matter ⁽⁸⁾. This diagram which rather faithfully reproduces both the jester's bauble and the caduceus, was known in antiquity: it has been discovered, engraved on a Punic monument in Lulybee ⁽⁹⁾. In the final analysis, the rattle or jester's bauble seems to be a caduceus whose esotericism is clearer than that of the stick with snakes, whether surmounted by a winged figure or not. Its name, (*marotte* in French) diminutive of *merotte*, little mother according to some, the universal mother of Mary, according to others, underlines the feminine nature and the generating virtue of the hermetic mystery, mother and nourisher of our king.

The word caduceus is less evocative as it retains in the Greek tongue the meaning of the announcer. The words [*254-1] (*kerukeion*) and [*254-2] (*caduceus*), both mean the herald or public barter; only their common root [*253-3] (*kerux*) for rooster (because the bird announces sunrise and the dawn of light), expresses one of the qualities of secret quicksilver. For that reason the rooster, herald of the sun was consecrated to the God Mercury and appears on our church steeples. If nothing in the bas-relief of Thiers reminds us of this bird, it cannot, however, be denied that it is hidden in the word caduceus, which our herald is holding in both

hands. For the stick, or scepter, which the heraldry officers bore was called caduceus just like the stick of Hermes. It is further known that it was among the herald's tasks to build as a sign of victory or for happy events, commemorative monuments called Montjoie --- Mounts of Joy ⁽¹⁰⁾. These were simple cairns or heaps of stones. The Man of the Woods therefore, appears to be both a representative of Mercury or nature's jester, and the mystical herald, marvelous worker whose masterpiece raises on the cairn (Mount of Joy), revealing sign of his material victory. And if this king at arms, this triumpher, prefers his faun outfit to the opulent uniform of the heralds, it is to demonstrate the straight path he was able to abide by, the indifference which he manifests towards material goods and worldly glory.

Next to a subject of such noble bearing, the little characters which accompany it have but a very unobtrusive role; we would be wrong, nevertheless, to neglect their study. No detail is superfluous in hermetic iconography and these humble depositories of secrets, modest images of ancestral thought, deserve to be questioned and examined with care. It is with less of an ornamental aim than in the charitable intention to enlighten those who prove their interest for them that they have been placed there. As for us we have never regretted devoting too much time and attention to the analysis of hieroglyphs of this kind. Often they have brought us the solution of the most abstruse problems and, in the practice, the success which we were seeking in vain without the help of their teaching.

The figures sculpted under their canopies and supported by the jester's sticks of the capitals are five in number. Four among them bear the mantle of the philosopher, which they open to show the different emblems of their duties. The furthest one from the Man of the Woods is standing in a corner formed by the angle of a modern gothic style niche which shelters behind its windows a little statue of the Virgin. A very hairy man with a long beard holds in his left hand a book and squeezes in his right hand the shaft of a lance or a fighting stick. These very suggestive attributes clearly show in form the two active and passive matters, whose mutual reaction yields, at the end of the philosopher's fight, the first substance of the Work. Some authors --- Nicolas Flamel and Basil Valentine in particular --- have given to these elements the conventional name of dragons; the celestial dragon which they represent with wings designates the volatile body, the terrestrial wingless dragon indicates the fixed body. "Of these two dragons or metallic principles", writes Flamel ⁽¹¹⁾, "I have said in my Summary mentioned above that the enemy would enflame by his ardor the fire of his enemy and then if we pay heed, one would see in the air a venomous fume of a bad odor, worse in flame and in poison than the envenomed head of a snake and of a Babylonian dragon". Generally when they only speak of a dragon philosophers think of the volatile. They recommend to kill it by piercing it with the thrust of a lance; and this operation has become among them the subject of numerous fables and various allegories. The agent is veiled under several names of similar esoteric value: Mars, Martha, Marcel, Michael, George, etc., and these knights of the sacred art, after a fierce fight which they always win, open in the flank of the mythical snake a large wound out of which flows a dark, thick, and viscous blood ⁽¹²⁾. Such is the secret truth which proclaims, on his wooden throne, the secular herald, mute and silent, screwed in place on his old dwelling.

The second character is more discreet and more reserved; he barely raises the flap of his coat, but this gesture allows us to notice a large closed book that he is holding firmly against his belt. We shall soon speak of him again.

After him comes a knight, energetic in his composure, who is clutching the hilt of his sword. Necessary weapon that he will use to kill the earthly and flying lion or griffin, mercurial hieroglyph we have studied on the manor of Lisieux. Here again is the emblematic statement

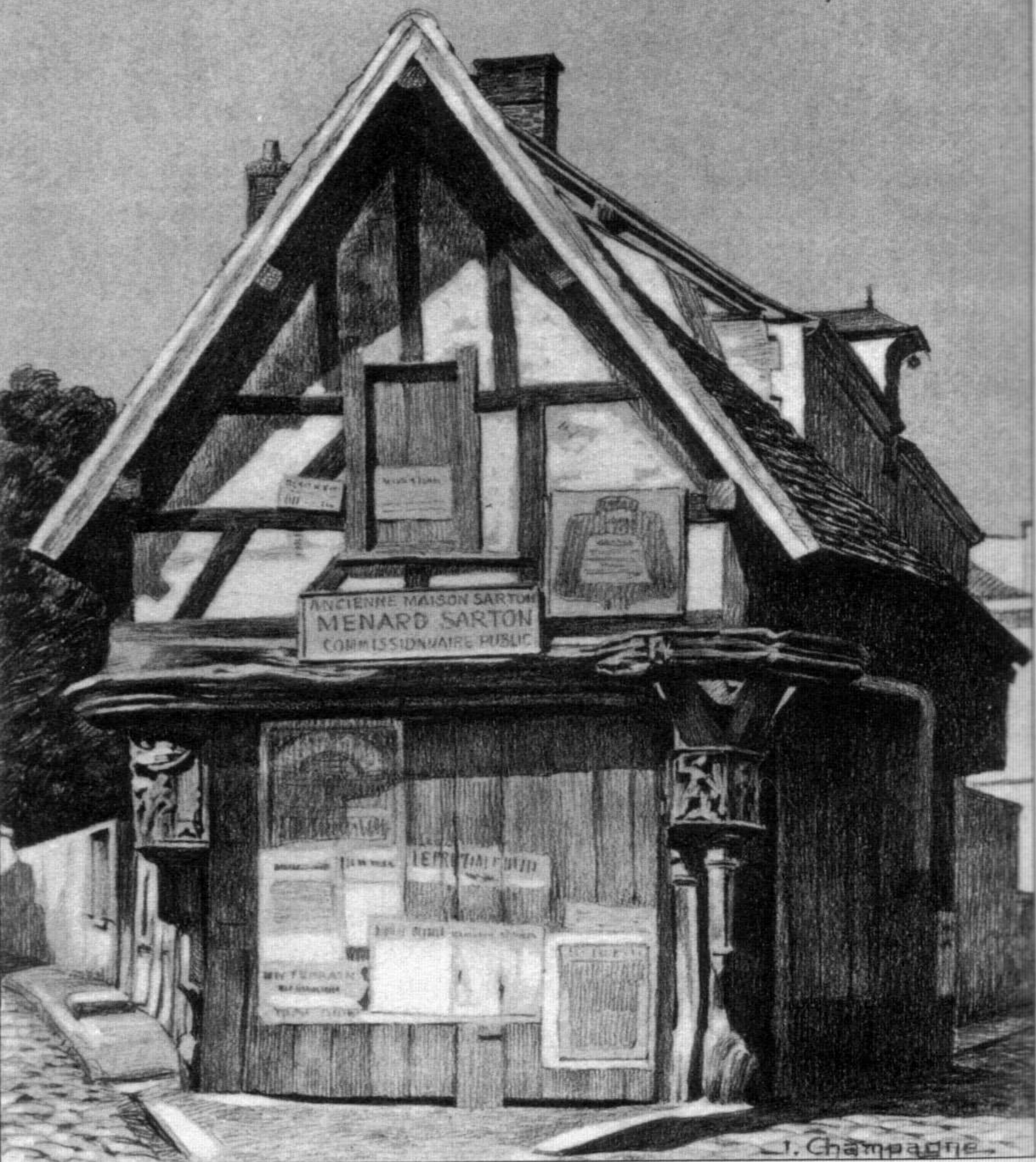
of an essential operation, that of the fixation of mercury and of its partial mutation into fixed sulphur. "The fixed blood of the red Lion", says Basil Valentine ⁽¹³⁾, on the subject, "is made of the volatile blood of the green Lion because they are both of the same nature". Note here that the version of the parable differs somewhat from those used by authors to describe this work; most if them indeed are content to represent the duel of the knight and the lion as it can be observed in the castle of Coucy (the tympanum of the dungeon gate) and on one of the bas-reliefs of the golden Carroir ⁽¹⁴⁾ in Romorantin (**Plate XIX**).

Of the following figure we could not give an exact interpretation. It is unfortunately mutilated, and we do not know what emblems it held in its hands, which are today broken. Alone in the symbolic following of the Man of the woods, this haloed and meditative young woman wearing a large open dress, takes on a clearly religious character and could possibly represent a virgin. In this case we would see there the humanized hieroglyphic of our first subject. But it is only a hypothesis and nothing allows us to develop a discourse. We will therefore skip this gracious motif regretting that it is incomplete in order to study the last of the figures, the Pilgrim.

Our traveler, without doubt, has traveled for a rather long time; yet his smile tells how happy and satisfied he is to have accomplished his vow. For his empty bag, his pilgrim staff without the calabash show us that this worthy son of the Auvergne province no longer has to worry about food and drink. Further, the shell attached to his hat, special sign of the pilgrims of St James of Compostella, proves that he comes straight back from Compostella. The tireless pedestrian brings back the open book --- the book adorned with beautiful images which Flamel did not know how to explain --- which a mysterious revelation allows him now to translate and to put into action. This book, although quite common, and even though everyone can easily acquire it, cannot be opened without previous revelation. God alone, through the intercession of Monsieur St James, grants, only to those whom he deems worthy, the essential enlightenment. It is the Book of Revelation, whose pages are closed with seven seals, the initiatory book presented to us by the characters in charge of exposing the higher truths of science. St James, disciple of the Savior, always keeps it. With the calabash, the blessed staff and the shell, he possesses the attributes necessary for the hidden teachings of the pilgrims of the Great Work. Here is the first secret, the one which the philosophers do not reveal and which they keep under the enigmatic expression of the Path of St James ⁽¹⁵⁾.

This pilgrimage, all alchemists must undertake. Figuratively at least, for it is a symbolic journey and whoever wants to gain from it, cannot leave the laboratory if only for a moment. He must constantly watch the vase, the matter, and the fire. He must day and night stay at the Work. Compostella, emblematic city, is not on Spanish ground, but in the very earth of the philosophical subject. Difficult, painful road full of surprises and danger. Long and tiring road by which the potential becomes realized and the occult manifest! The sages have veiled this delicate preparation of the first matter or common mercury under the allegory of the pilgrimage to the city of Compostella.

Our mercury, we believe it has been mentioned, is this pilgrim, this voyager to whom Michael Maier has consecrated one of his best treatises ⁽¹⁶⁾! By using the dry path, represented by the earthly road followed at first by our traveler, one can successfully but progressively exalt the diffuse and latent virtue, transforming into activity that which was only potential. The operation is completed when, on the surface, appears a shining star, formed of rays emanating from a single center, prototype of the great roses of our gothic cathedrals. A sure sign that the pilgrim has successfully reached the end of his first trip. He has received the mystical blessing of St James, confirmed by the luminous imprint which radiated, it is said, above the tomb of



ROMORANTIN
The Golden Carroir (15th Century)

the apostle. The humble and common shell which he bore on his hat turned into a shining star, a halo of light. Pure matter whose hermetic star consecrates the perfection: it is now our compost, the holy water of Compostella (Latin *compos*, who has received, possesses --- and *stella*, star) and the alabaster of the sages (alabastrum contraction of alabastrum, white star). It is also the vase of perfumes, the vase of alabaster (Greek [*260-1]--- *alabastron*, Latin *alabastrus*) and the newly blooming bud of the flower of wisdom, *rosa hermetica*, the hermetic rose.

From Compostella the return can be made either by the same path, following a different itinerary or by the wet or maritime path, the only way the authors indicate in their writings. In this case the pilgrim choosing the maritime route boards under the leadership of an expert pilot, a proven mediator captain capable of ensuring the safety of the vessel during the entire crossing. Such is the difficult part played by the *Pilote de l'Onde Vive* ⁽¹⁷⁾ because the sea is full of reefs, and storms are frequent.

These suggestions help to understand the error into which many occultists have fallen by taking literally the purely allegorical tales, written with the intention of teaching the ones what ought to remain veiled for others. Albert Poisson allowed himself to fall into this strategem. He believed that Nicolas Flamel, leaving Lady Perenelle, his wife, his school, and his manuscript illuminations, had truly accomplished on foot and by the Spanish route, the vow taken before the altar of St Jacques-la-Boucherie, his parish church. We certify --- and you can trust our honesty --- that Flamel never left the cellar where his furnaces burned. He who knows what the pilgrims; staff, the calabash, and the shell of the hat of St James are, also knows that we are telling the truth. By substituting himself to the materials and by following the example of the internal agent the Great Adept obeyed the rules of the philosophers' discipline and followed the example of his predecessors. Raymond Lully tells us that he made, in 1267, immediately after his conversion and at the age of 32 the pilgrimage to St James of Compostella. All masters, therefore, have used the allegory; and these imaginary accounts which the laymen understood as realities or ridiculous tales according to the meaning of the versions, are precisely the ones where truth asserts itself with the most clarity. Basil Valentine ends his first book which serves as an introduction to the *Douze Clefs (Twelve Keys)* by an escapade into Mount Olympus. There he has the gods speak, and each one of them beginning with Saturn, gives his opinion, his advice, and explains his own influence on the process of the Great Work. Bernard Trevisan says very few things in forty pages; but the value of his *Livre de la Philosophie naturelle des metaux (Book on the Natural Philosophy of Metals)* is in the few pages composing in his famous Parable (Parable) is in the few pages composing the secret of the Work in approximately 15 lines in the *Enigme du Mercure Philosophal (Enigma of the Philosophical Mercury)* found in the *Traite du Ciel Terrestre (Treatise of the Terrestrial Sky)*. One of the most highly considered alchemical handbooks of the middle ages, *Code de Verite (Code of Truth)*, also called *Turba Philosophorum*, contains an allegory where several artists play the chemical drama of the Great Work in a very poignant scene animated by the Spirit of Pythagoras. A classical and anonymous work generally attributed to Trevisan, the *Songe Verd (The Green Dream)* exposes the practice under the traditional formula of the artisan transported during his sleep to a celestial earth, peopled with unknown inhabitants living amidst a marvelous flora. Each author chooses the theme which pleases him most and develops it according to his fantasy. The Cosmopolite resumes the familiar dialogues of the medieval period and is inspired by Jehan de Meung ⁽¹⁸⁾. More modern, Cyliani hides the preparation of mercury under the fiction of a nymph who guides and directs him in this labor. As for Nicolas Flamel, he strays from the beaten paths and time-honored fables; more original if not clearer, he prefers to disguise himself under the features of the subject of the sages and leaves to whoever can understand, this revealing but assumed autobiography.

All the effigies of Flamel represented him as a pilgrim. As such he figured on the porch of the Church of St Jacques-la-Boucherie, and also that of St Genevieve-des-Ardents, and he had himself painted in that same disguise on the Arch of the Cemetary of the Innocents ⁽¹⁹⁾. *The Dictionnaire Historique (The Historical Dictionary)* of Louis Moreri mentions a painted portrait of Nicolas Flamel which was seen exhibited at the time of Borel --- about 1650 --- at the house of Monsieur Ardres, a physician. There again the Adept had donned the costume he preferred above all. Unusual detail, "his hood was of three colors, black, white, red", colorations of the three main stages of the Work. By imposing this symbolical formula on sculptors and painters, the alchemist Flamel hid the middle class personality of Flamel the writer, under that of St James the Great, hieroglyph of the secret mercury. These images no longer exist today, but we can still have a rather exact picture of what they looked like by the statues of the apostle, carved at the same time. A masterly work of the 14th century belonging to the Abbey of Westminster shows us St James clothed with the mantle, a satchel by his side, wearing a large hat ornamented with the shell. He holds in his left hand a closed book protected by a cover forming a case. Alone, the pilgrim's staff, on which he leaned with his right hand, has disappeared (**Plate XX**).

The closed book, vivid symbol of the subject which alchemists use and take with them at the beginning is the one which the second character of the man of the Woods is holding so fervently. The book, signed with characters, which enables us to recognize it, to appreciate its virtue, and its purpose. The famous manuscript of Abraham the Jew, of which Flamel takes with him a copy of the images, is a work of the same nature and similar quality. Thus fiction, substituted for reality, takes shape and asserts itself as the trip toward Compostella. We know how much the Adept is stingy in giving information about his trip which he accomplished at a stretch, "And so in the same fashion", he is content to write ⁽²⁰⁾, "I began my trip and I did so well that I arrived at Mount Joy (the cairn) and then at St James where with great devotion I accomplished my vow". A description indeed reduced to its simplest expression. No itinerary, no incident, not the least indication about the duration of the trip. At that time, the English occupied the entire French territory: Flamel does not say one word about it. A single cabalistic term, Mount Joy (the cairn), that the Adept obviously uses on purpose. It is the clue to the blessed phase of the trip, long awaited, long hoped for, where the book is finally opened, the happy Mount Joy (the cairn) on whose summit shines the hermetic star ⁽²¹⁾. The matter has undergone a first preparation, the common quicksilver has turned into philosophical hydrargyrum, but we learn nothing more. The road followed is knowingly kept secret.

The arrival in Compostella implies the acquisition of the star. But the philosophical subject is yet too impure to undergo maturation. Our mercury must be progressively elevated to the supreme degree of the required purity through a series of sublimations requiring the help of a special substance before it is partially coagulated into living sulphur. To initiate his reader to these operations, Flamel tells us that a merchant of Boulogne ⁽²²⁾ --- whom we identify with the indispensable mediator --- put him in contact with a Jewish rabbi, Master Canches, "a man quite learned in the sublime sciences". Therefore, our three characters have their respective roles perfectly established. Flamel, we have said, represents the philosophical mercury; his very name speaks like a pseudonym chosen on purpose. Nicolas, in Greek [*265-1] (*Nicolaus*), means conqueror of the stone (from [*265-2], *nike*, victory, and [*265-3] --- *laos*, stone, rock). Flamel is close to the Latin *Flamma*, flame or fire, expressing the igneous and coagulating virtue the prepared matter possesses, a virtue enabling it to fight against the fieriness of fire, to feed from it and to triumph over it. During the sublimation, the merchant acts as an intermediary ⁽²³⁾, which requires a violent fire. In this case, [*265-4] --- *emporos*, merchant, is put in for [*265-5] --- *empuros*, that which is worked on by means of fire. It is



LONDON - WESTMINSTER ABBEY
Statue of Saint James the Greater

our secret fire, called lunatic Vulcan by author of *The Ancient War of the Knights*. Master Canches, whom Flamel introduces as his initiator, expresses the white sulphur, principle of coagulation and dessication. The name comes from the Greek [*265-6] --- *kagkanos*, for dry, arid, from the root [*265-7] --- *kagkaino*, meaning to heat up, to dry up, words whose meaning expresses the styptic quality which the Ancients attributed to the sulphur of the philosophers. The esotericism is complete by the Latin word *Candens*, which indicates that which is white, of a pure, shining white obtained by fire, that which is fiery and burning. One could not, with one word, better characterize sulphur from a physico-chemical standpoint, or the Initiate or Cathar from a philosophical standpoint.

Flamel and master Canches, united by an indestructible friendship, are not about to travel together. The mercury, sublimated, manifests its fixed part, and the sulphurous basis marks the first stage of coagulation. The intermediary is abandoned or disappears: he will no longer be mentioned. The three are now reduced to two --- sulphur and mercury --- and realize what is commonly called the philosophical amalgam, simple chemical combination not yet radical. Here intervenes the coction, an operation whose task is to ensure the newly formed compost with an indissoluble and irreducible union of its elements, and their complete transformation into fixed red sulphur, medicine of the first order according to Geber.

The two friends agree to return by sea instead of using the terrestrial route. Flamel does not tell us the reasons for this decision, which he simply submits to the appreciation of the researchers. Be that as it may, the second part of the trip is long, dangerous, uncertain, and vain, says an anonymous author, if the least error slips into it. Indeed, in our opinion, the dry path would be preferable, but we have no choice. Cyliani warns his reader that he describes the wet way, full of difficulties and surprises, only by duty. Our Adept deems the same, and we must respect his will. It is notorious that a great number of inexperienced sailors, underwent shipwrecks during their first crossing. One must always carefully watch the ship's orientation, maneuver with prudence, watch out for the gusts of wind, foresee the storm, be constantly on the alert, avoid the abyss of Charybdis and the reef of Scylla, fight unceasingly, night and day, against the roughness of the sea. To direct the hermetic ship is not a small task, and master Canches, whom we suspect to have been pilot and conductor for the Argonaut Flamel, must have been very skilled in the matter. Such also is the case with sulphur which energetically resists the assaults, the deterrent influence of mercurial humidity, but which eventually is vanquished and dies under its blows. Thanks to his companion, Flamel was able to disembark, safe and sound, in Orleans ⁽²⁴⁾, where the sea voyage was to naturally and symbolically end. Unfortunately, barely on solid ground, Canches, the good guide, dies, victim of great vomitings from which he had suffered on the waters. His grieving friend has him buried in the church of Sainte-Croix, Holy Cross ⁽²⁵⁾ and returns home alone, but instructed, and happy to have attained the end of his desires.

The vomitings of sulphur are the best clues of its dissolution and mortification. Arrived at this stage, the Great Work, on the surface, takes on the appearance of a fat soup sprinkled with pepper, *ibrodium saginatum piperatum*, say the texts. From then on, the mercury blackens more and more each day and its consistency becomes syrupy, and then pasty. When the blackness reaches its maximum intensity, the putrefaction of the elements is accomplished and their union realized; everything appears firm in the vase until the solid mass cracks, chips, crumbles, and is finally reduced to an amorphous powder, black as coal. You will then see", writes Philalethes ⁽²⁶⁾, a remarkable black color and the entire earth will be dried up. The death of the compound took place. The winds cease and all things come to rest. It is the great eclipse of the sun and of the moon; no luminary shines on the earth any longer, and the sea disappears". Thus we understand why Flamel relates the death of his friend; why the latter,

having undergone the dislocation of its parts by a sort of crucifixion, had his tomb placed under the invocation and sign of the Holy Cross. What we understand less is the funeral eulogy, rather paradoxical, pronounced by our Adept on behalf of the rabbi: "May God have his soul", he cries out, "for he died a good Christian". He probably had only in mind the fictitious torture endured by his philosophical companion.

Such are, studied in the very sequence of the account, the relationships --- too eloquent to be more coincidences --- which have contributed to establish our conviction. These unusual and precise concordances demonstrate that the pilgrimage of Flamel is a pure allegory, a very skillful and very ingenious fiction of the alchemical labor which the charitable and to which the learned man devoted himself. What remains now is to speak of the mysterious work, of the Liber which was the initial cause of the imaginary trip, and to say which esoteric truths it is entrusted to reveal.

In spite of certain book-lovers' opinions, we confess that it has always been impossible for us to believe in the reality of the Book of Abraham the Jew, nor in what its fortunate owner relates in his *Figures Hieroglyphiques*. In our opinion, this famous manuscript, as unknown as it is impossible to find, seems to be nothing more than another invention of the great Adept, destined, like the preceding one, to instruct the disciples of Hermes. It is a summary of the characteristics which distinguish the primal matter of the Work, as well as the properties it acquires during preparation. About this topic, we will enter into some measure of detail appropriately chosen to justify our thesis and to provide useful indications to enthusiasts of the sacred art. Faithful to the rule we have imposed upon ourselves, we shall limit our explanation to important points of the practice by carefully avoiding substituting new figures for those that we have unveiled. We teach certain, positive and genuine things, things seen by our own eyes, a thousand times touched by our hands, sincerely described, so as to direct anew those onto the simple and natural path who have erred and who have been abused.

The legendary work of Abraham is only known to us by the description which Nicolas Flamel left in his famous treatise ⁽²⁷⁾. Our bibliographical documentation is limited to this sole narration, which includes an alleged copy of the title.

According to the testimony of Albert Poisson ⁽²⁸⁾, Cardinal Richelieu would have had it in his possession; he buttresses hypothesis by the seizure of the papers of a certain Monsieur Dubois, hanged after having been tortured, accounted, rightly or wrongly, to have been Flamel's last descendant ⁽²⁹⁾. Nevertheless, nothing proves that Dubois inherited the unusual manuscript, and even less proves that Richelieu seized it, since the book was never mentioned anywhere since Flamel's death. Sometimes, it is true, so-called copies of the *Book of Abraham* are seen here and there on the market. These books, in very small number, have no relationship among themselves, and are spread over a few private libraries. The ones that we know are nothing more than attempts at reconstruction after Flamel. In all of them, we find the title in French very exactly reproduced and conforming to the translation of the Hieroglyphic Figures, but it entitles versions so different and above all so removed from Hermetic principles, that they reveal ipso facto their sophistic origin. Flamel exalts the clarity of the text, "written in beautiful and very understandable Latin", to the extent that he takes legal cognizance of it and refuse to transmit the least excerpt to posterity. As a consequence, no correlation can exist between the alleged original and the apocryphal copies we mention. As for the pictures which would have illustrated the work in question, they also have been done according to Flamel's descriptions. Drawn and painted in the 17th century, they are actually part of the French alchemical collection of the Bibliotheque de l'Arsenal ⁽³⁰⁾.

As a summary, for the text as well as for the pictures, one must simply be content to respect, in these attempts at reconstitution, the little information given by Flamel; everything else is pure invention. Finally, since no bibliographer has ever been able to discover the original, and since we are not materially able to correlate the Adept's account, we are forced to conclude that it is a nonexistent and fictitious work.

Anyway, surprises lie in store for us in the analysis of Nicolas Flamel's text. First, here is the excerpt from the *Hieroglyphic Figures* which contributed to spread among alchemists and bibliophiles. The quasi-certainty of the reality of the book attributed to Abraham the Jew. "And so I, Nicolas Flamel, writer, thus after the death of my parents, earned my living in the Art of Writing, drawing up Inventories, and all the accounting work for tutors and those not of legal age, I came upon a book which was golden, rather old, and quite wide for the sum of two florins; it was not made out of paper or parchment, as others are, but it was made out of fine-laminated copper, entirely engraved with strange letters and figures; as for me, I think that they might have been Greek characters or some similar ancient language. Since I did not know how to read them and since I knew quite well that they were not Latin or Gallic letters or numbers, for I understand a little of both. As for the inside, the bark pages were engraved with a very great workmanship, written with an iron stiletto, in very beautiful and very clear Roman letters which were colored. It contained 3 times 7 signets"...

Do we even need to mention the strangeness of a work constituted of such elements? Its originality borders on the bizarre, even the extravagant. The book, very large, resembles in this manner Italian-style picture books containing reproductions of landscapes, architecture, etc., prints ordinarily presented in landscape format. It is, we are told, golden, although its cover is of copper, which is not very clear. Let us pass over this detail. The pages are made of the bark of young shrubby trees; Flamel probably wants to indicate papyrus, which would give the book a respectable antiquity; but these barks, instead of having been written or painted on directly, are engraved with an iron stiletto before their coloration. We no longer understand. How could the narrator know that the stiletto which would have been used by Abraham was made out of steel rather than wood or ivory? It is for us an enigma as indecipherable as this other: the legendary rabbi wrote in Latin a treatise dedicated to his fellow Jews. Why did he use Latin, the common scientific language in the Middle Ages? By using the Hebrew tongue, which was less widespread in these days, he could have avoided casting the anathema, and shouting out Maranatha to all those who tried to study it. Finally, in spite of Flamel's affirmations, this old manuscript had just been written --- one cannot think of everything --- when he acquired it. In fact, Abraham says he only wants to reveal his secrets so as to come to the help of the sons of Israel, persecuted at that same period when the future Adept was reading his text: "To the Jewish people dispersed in the Gallic countries by the wrath of God, Salut, cries out the Levite, prince, priest and Hebrew astrologer at the beginning of his book.

And so, the great master Abraham, doctor and light of Israel, reveals himself, if we take him literally, to be a bona fide mystifier and his work, fraudulently archaic, to have no authenticity, as if it were unable to hold through critical examination. However, if we consider that the book and the author never had any other existence except in Nicolas Flamel's fertile imagination, we must think that all these things, so diverse, so unusual, hold a mysterious meaning important to discover.

Let us begin the analysis with the presumed author of the fictitious book. Who is this Abraham? The Patriarch par excellence, in Greek [*270-1] --- *patriarches*, is the first author of the family, from the roots [*270-2] --- *pater*, father, and [*270-3] --- *arce*, beginning,

principle, origin, source, foundation. The Latin name Abraham, which the Bible gives to the venerable ancestor of the Hebrews, means Father of a multitude. He is therefore the first author of created things, the source of all that lives on earth, the unique primordial substance whose different specifications inhabit the three kingdoms of nature. *The Book of Abraham* is consequently the *Book of the Principle*, and since this book is devoted, according to Flamel, to alchemy, that part of science which studies the evolution of mineral bodies, we learn that it deals with the original metallic matter, basis and foundation of the sacred art.

Flamel buys this book for the sum of two florins, which means the total price of the materials and combustibles necessary for the work was valued at two florins in the 14th century. The raw material alone, in sufficient quantity, was worth about 10 sols. Philalethes, who wrote his treatise of the *Introitus* in 1645, brings the total cost to three florins. "And so", he says, "you will see that the Work, in its essential materials, will not exceed the price of three ducats or three gold florins. Further, the expense of making the water barely exceeds two crowns per pound" ⁽³¹⁾.

The volume, golden, rather old and quite wide, resembles ordinary books in no way; probably because it is made and composed of another material. The gilding which covers it gives it a metallic appearance. And if the Adept affirms that it is old, it is only to establish the high antiquity of the hermetic subject. "I will therefore say", asserts an anonymous author ⁽³²⁾, "that the matter from which the stone of the philosophers is made was immediately made when man was first created, and its name is philosophical earth... But no one knows it, except the true philosophers, who are the children of the Art". Although this misunderstood book is very common, it includes many things and contains some great hidden truths. Flamel is therefore right to say that it is wide; *largus* in Latin means abundant, rich, copious, a word derived from the Greek [*271-1] --- *la*, considerable, much, and [*271-2] --- *ergon*, thing. Furthermore, the Greek [*271-3] --- *platus*, large, also means in common use, widespread, well known, exposed to all eyes. There is no better way to define the universality of the subject of the sages.

Pursuing his description, our writer believes the book of Abraham to be made of the rolled bark of young shrubby trees, at least so it seemed to him. Flamel is not very assertive about this point, and for good reason: he knows very well that besides a few very rare exceptions, for the past three centuries, medieval parchment had been substituted for Egyptian papyrus ⁽³³⁾. And, although we cannot paraphrase this laconic expression, we must recognize that there the author speaks very clearly. A shrub is a young tree, just as a mineral is a young metal. The bark of ganque which serves to envelop this mineral, allows man to identify it with certainty, owing to the external characteristics it has taken on. We have already emphasized the name given by the Ancients to their matter which they called *liber*, the book. Further, the mineral presents a specific configuration; the crystalline laminae forming its texture are, as in mica, superposed in the manner of the pages of a book. It owed to its external appearance the epithet of leprous and that of Dragon covered with scales, because its matrix is scaly, unpleasant and coarse to the touch. A simple piece of advice about this remark: preferably choose samples whose scales are the largest and the most defined.

"Its cover was made out of fine laminated copper, entirely engraved with strange letters or figures".

The ore often takes on a pale coloration like brass, sometimes reddish like copper; in any case, its scales seem covered with intertwined lineaments having the appearance of bizarre varied and ill-defined signs or characters. We called attention earlier to the obvious

contradiction existing between the golden book and its copper binding, for it cannot describe here its internal structure. Likely the Adept wants to attract our attention, on the one hand, to the metallic specification of the substance figured by his book, and on the other hand, to the faculty possessed by this mineral to partially transmute itself into gold. This curious property is indicated by Philalethes in his *Commentary on the Epistle of Ripley* addressed to King Edward IV. "Without using the transmutative elixir", says the author speaking of our subject, "I can easily extract the gold and silver it contains, which can be attested by those who have seen it as well as I". This operation is not advisable, because it takes away any work value; but we can assert that the philosophical matter truly contains the gold of the sages, imperfect, white and crude gold, vile compared to precious metal, yet much higher to gold even when we only consider the Hermetic labor. In spite of its humble copper cover with engraved scales, the book of Abraham the Jew, is indeed a golden book, and it is the famous little book of fine gold of which Bernard de Trevisan speaks in his Parable. Further, it seems that Nicolas Flamel understood the confusion that could result in the reader's mind from this duality of meaning when he writes in the same treatise: "May no one blame me if he doesn't easily understand me, for he will be more blameworthy than I, as he has not been initiated into these sacred and secret interpretations of the first agent (which is the key opening of all sciences), nevertheless he wants to understand the most subtle conceptions of the most envious ⁽³⁴⁾ philosophers, which are only written for those who already know these principles, principles which can never be found in any book".

Finally, the author of the *Figures Hieroglyphiques* concludes his description by saying: "As for the inside, the bark pages were engraved with a great workmanship, written with an iron stiletto".

Here he no longer described the physical appearance, but rather the preparation of the same subject. To reveal a secret of this magnitude and this significance could be to overstep the limits which are imposed on us. Therefore, we shall not attempt to comment in clear language, as we have done up to now, on the ambiguous and rather allegorical sentence of Flamel. We will merely attract your attention on this iron stiletto, whose secret property changes the intimate nature of our Magnesia, separates, orders, purifies and assembles the elements of the mineral chaos. To successfully perform this operation, one must know the affinities of things, have a lot of skill, and perform a lot of work, as the Adept leaves us to understand. However, so as to provide some help to the artist in the resolution of this difficulty, we would like to point out to him that, in the primitive language, which is archaic Greek, all words containing the diphthong [*** 273-1] (*er*) must be taken into consideration. [*** 273-2] (*er*) has remained, in phonetic Cabala, the sound expression dedicated to the active light, to the incarnated spirit, to the manifest or hidden corporeal fire. [*** 273-2] (*er*), contraction of [*** 273-3] (*e-ar*), is the birth of the light, springtime and morning, beginning, dawn. Through the vibration of atmospheric air the dark waves emanate from the sun and become luminous. Air --- in Greek [*** 273-4] (*aer*) --- is the support, the vehicle of light. Through the vibration of atmospheric air the dark waves emanate from the sun and become luminous. Ether or the sky ([*** 273-4] --- *aiter*) is the chosen place, the abode of pure light. Among metallic bodies, the one containing the highest proportion of fire, or latent light, is iron ([*** 273-5] --- *sideros*). The ease with which internal fire, through shock or friction, can fly out in the form of brilliant sparks is well known. It is important to communicate this active fire to the passive subject: only it has the power to modify its cold and sterile complexion by rendering it fiery and prolific. The sages call it green lion, wild and ferocious lion --- cabalistically [***-273-6] --- *leon pher* ⁽³⁵⁾ --- which is rather suggestive so as to dispense from insisting any further.

In a previous work while describing a bas-relief from the basement of Notre-Dame de Paris ⁽³⁶⁾ we have pointed out the relentless fight which the bodies, placed in contact, engage in. Another translation of the hermetic combat exists on the façade of a wooden house, built in the 15th century at la Ferte-Bernard (Sarthe). There again we find the jester, the man with a tree trunk, the pilgrim, familiar images which seem to be part of a formula applied towards the end of the Middle Ages to the decoration of the modest dwellings of unpretentious alchemists. We also see the Adept in prayer as well as the mermaid, emblem of united and pacified natures, whose meaning has been commented upon elsewhere. That which especially interests us --- because the subject is directly connected to our analysis --- are the two angry, distorted and grimacing marmosets sculpted on the two outside supports of the cornice on the third floor (**Plate XXI and Plate XXII**). Too far removed from each other to be able to come to grips, they attempt to satisfy their native aversion for each other by throwing stones. These grotesque figures have the same hermetic meaning as that of the children on the porch of Notre-Dame. They attack each other with frenzy and try to stone one another. While in the cathedral of Paris the indication of the opposite tendencies is given by the different gender of the young fighters, it is only the aggressive character of the figures which appears on the Sarthe dwelling. Two men, of similar appearance and costume, express, one, the mineral body, and two, the other the metallic body. This external similitude further reconciles fiction with physical reality, but resolutely deviates from operative esotericism.

If the reader has understood what we wish to teach, he will find without difficulty in these diverse symbolic expressions of the combat of the two natures the secret materials whose reciprocal destruction opens the first door to the work. These bodies are Nicolas Flamel's two dragons, Basil Valentine's eagle and lion, and Philalethes and the Cosmopolite's magnet and steel.

As for the operation by which the artist inserts into the philosophical subject the igneous agent which is its animator, the Ancients have described it under the allegory of the fight of the eagle and the lion, or of the two natures, one volatile, the other fixed. The Church has veiled it in the dogma, entirely spiritual and rigorously true, of the Visitation. At the end of this artifice, the book, opened, shows its engraved bark leaves. It then appears, to the eyes' astonishment and the soul's joy, covered with admirable signs which manifest its constitutional change.

Bow down, Magi of the Orient, and you, Doctors of the Law; bow your forehead, sovereign princes of the Persians, of the Arabs and of India! Watch, adore and be silent, for you could never understand. This is the divine Work, supernatural, ineffable, whose mystery no mortal will ever penetrate. In the nocturnal, silent and deep firmament shines one single star, an enormous heavenly body, resplendent, composed of all the celestial stars, your luminous guide and the torch of universal Wisdom. See: the Virgin and Jesus are resting, calm and serene under the palm tree of Egypt. A new sun irradiates the center of the center of the wicker basket which the cystophores of Bacchus, the priestesses of Isis, the Ichthus of the Christian catacombs bore once upon a time. The ancient prophecy is at last realized. Oh miracle! God, master of the Universe, incarnates himself for the salvation of the world and is born on men's earth in the frail form of a very little child.

(1) Remark in passing, that the piled-up stones or some fissured rocks are indeed reproduced here and not waters. We find the obvious proof of this in a subject of the 16th century located in the same region: the bas-relief of Adam and Eve at Montferrand (Puy-le-Dome). On it we notice our first parents, tempted by the human-headed snake, curled around the Tree of



LA FERTÉ-BERNARD (SARTHE) - 15TH CENTURY HOUSE
Marmosets and sculptures on the facade (left side)



LA FERTÉ-BERNARD (SARTHE) - 15TH CENTURY HOUSE
Sculptures on the facade (right side)

Paradise. The ground of this beautiful composition is treated in the same fashion and the tree of life develops its roots around a pile in all ways similar to the one on top of which the Man of the Woods is standing.

(2) [*** 251-1] (*mustes*) has for root [*** 251-3] (*muo*) to be silent, to conceal, from which comes the old French word *musser* which corresponds to the Picard word *mucher*, to hide, to dissimulate.

(3) This is the reason for the appearance of his clothing and his local name.

(4) *Le Grand Calendrier ou Compost des Bergers...*; Lyons, Louys Odin, 1633.

(5) Translator's Note: Origin of the French saying "to mistake bladders with lanterns", whose analog in English is: "to believe that the moon is made of green cheese".

(6) Some occultists place the Jester or the Alchemist as the last of the 21 cards of the deck, that is to say, after the card The World and it is given the highest value. Such an order would be without any great consequence --- the Jester having no number, being out of the sequences --- if we did not know that the tarot, complete hieroglyph of the Great Work contained the 21 operations or stages through which the philosophical mercury must pass before it reaches the final perfection of the Elixir. Since the work occurs precisely thanks to the jester or the prepared mercury submitted to the will of the operator, it seems logical to us to name the artisans before the phenomena which must be born from their collaboration.

(7) In Greek [*** 253-1] --- *krotalon*, rattle, corresponds to our *crotale*, or rattle snake, and we know that, in the hermetic science, all snakes are hieroglyphs of the mercury of the sages.

(8) It is only in the 16th century that a crossing bar was added to the original vertical line so as to represent the cross, image of death and resurrection.

(9) Philippe Berger: *Revue Archaeologique (Archaeological Review)*, April 1884.

(10) Translator's Note: *Montjoie* is the name the French gave to cairns or heaps of stone and it can translate as mounds of joy or my joy or mounds of joy as all these interpretations sound the same in French.

(11) *Le Livre des Figures Hieroglyphiques*, op cit.

(12) The myth of the dragon and of the knight who attacks it, plays an important role in the heroic or popular legends as well as in the mythologies of all people. The Scandinavian tales as well as the Asian ones describe to us these exploits. In the middle ages the knight *Gozon*, the knight of *Belzunce*, *St Romain*, etc., fight and kill the dragon. The Chinese fable is closer to reality. It tells us of the famous alchemist *Hujumsin*, ranked among the gods for having discovered the philosophers' stone; he had killed a horrible dragon which ravaged the country and he had attached the corpse of this monster on the top of a pillar, "which can still be seen today", says the legend. After which the alchemist was raised to the sky.

(13) *Les Douze Clefs de Philosophie*, op. cit. II, p. 140.

(14) The golden Square House (*Carroir*), a dwelling of wood, built in the 15th century has a ground floor of which only the structure remains and a gabled attic, added later. Houses, just like books and men, often have a strange destiny. An unfortunate fate caused this beautiful mansion to lose its corner towers. Built at the intersection of two streets, it forms a cut-off corner, and we know how medieval builders could take advantage of such a layout, by beveling edges, by rounding off the lateral juttings of the corbelled parts with turrets, *barizans*, and watchtowers. We can assume that this golden square house, if we judge by the elongated shapes of its corner pillars in an out of plumb position, must have looked like the harmonious and original type of building which was favored by medieval esthetics. Unfortunately nothing remains of it except some sculpted corbels, crude, half-worm-eaten, miserable bony extensions, fleshless patella of a wooden skeleton.

(15) Thus it is still called the Milky Way. The Greek mythologists tell us that the gods walked this Way to go to the Palace of Zeus and that the heroes also used it to enter into Mount Olympus. The path of *St James* is the starry road, accessible to the elect ones, to the brave, knowledgeable, and persevering mortals.

(16) *Viatoroum: Hoc est de Montibus Planetarum septem seu metallorum*; Rouen, Hean Berthelin, 1651.

(17) *Pilot of the Live Wave*, which is the title of an alchemical work by Mathurin Eyquem, Esquire of Marineau published by Jean d'Houry, Paris 1678.

(18) Translator's Note: Author of the *Roman de la Rose*.

- (19) Translator's Note: A cemetery for lost children who died in Paris.
- (20) In other words, in the disguise of a pilgrim; he had himself later represented at the Charnal house of the Innocents wearing the same disguise.
- (21) The legend of St James told by Albert Poisson, contains the same symbolic truth. "In 835 Theodomir, bishop of Iria, was told by a mountain dweller that, on a wooded hill some distance west of Mt Pedrose, one could see at night a soft slightly bluish star with marvelous shining quality above the same place. Theodomir went with his entire clergy to this hill; they searched in the indicated place and they found in a marble coffin a perfectly preserved body, which certain clues proved to be that of the apostle, St James". The present cathedral, destined to replace the early primitive church, destroyed by the Arabs in 997, was built in 1082.
- (22) Boulogne presents some analogy with the Greek [*** 265-7] (*boulaios*), the one who presides over councils. Diana was nicknamed [*** 265-8] (*boulaia*), goddess of good advice.
- (23) [*** 265-9] (*mesites*), root [*** 265-10] (*mesos*), that which is in the middle, which stands between two extremes. It is our Messiah who in the Work fulfills the mediator's function of Christ between the Creator and his creature, between God and man.
- (24) Orleans, French town; the name sounds like "or leans", which in old French means "gold is here", or "there is gold her".
- (25) Similar to that of Christ, the passion, the martyrdom of sulphur which dies to redeem its metallic brothers, ends with the redemptive cross.
- (26) *Introitus apertus ad oclusum Ragis palatium*, op cit., XX, 6.
- (27) Nicolas Flamel: *Le Livre des Figures Hieroglyphiques*; translated from Latin to French by P. Arnauld in *Three Treatises of Natural Philosophy*, Paris, G. Marete, 1612.
- (28) Albert Poisson: *L'Alchimie au XIVe siecle. Nicolas Flamel (Alchemy in the 14th Century --- Nicolas Flamel)*; Paris, Chacornac, 1893.
- (29) Flamel died on March 22, 1418, holiday for the traditional alchemists. On that day the spring equinox opens the time for the Great Work.
- (30) *Recueil de Sept Figures Peintes (Memoir about Seven Painted Figures)*; Bibliotheque de l'Arsenal. #3047 (153 S.A.F.). On the back of the folio A there is a note from the secretary of Monsieur de Paulmy, to whom the book belonged, note corrected by Palmy's hand which says: "The seven illuminated figures of this volume are the famous figures which Flamel found in a book authored by Abraham the Jew".
- (31) *Introitus apertus ad oclusum Ragis palatium*, op cit.
- (32) *Discours d'Autheur incertain sur la Pierre des Philosophes (Discourse from an Uncertain Author about the Philosophers' Stone)*; Manuscript of the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris, dated from 1590, # 19957 (Former French St Germain). A manuscript copy of the same treatise dated from April 1, 1696, belongs to the Bibliotheque de l'Arsenal, # 3031 (180, S.A.F.).
- (33) The use of papyrus was completely abandoned at the end of the 11th century or at the beginning of the 12th.
- (34) Translator's Note: Envious in the old meaning of sparring with their words.
- (35) Translator's Note: [*** 273-9] --- *leon fer*, is a phonetic rendering in Greek for the French *lion vert* (green lion).
- (36) See *Le Mystere des Cathedrales*, p. 79 (1926 edition) or p. 95 (1957 ed.)

THE SPELLS AND WONDERS OF THE CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE I

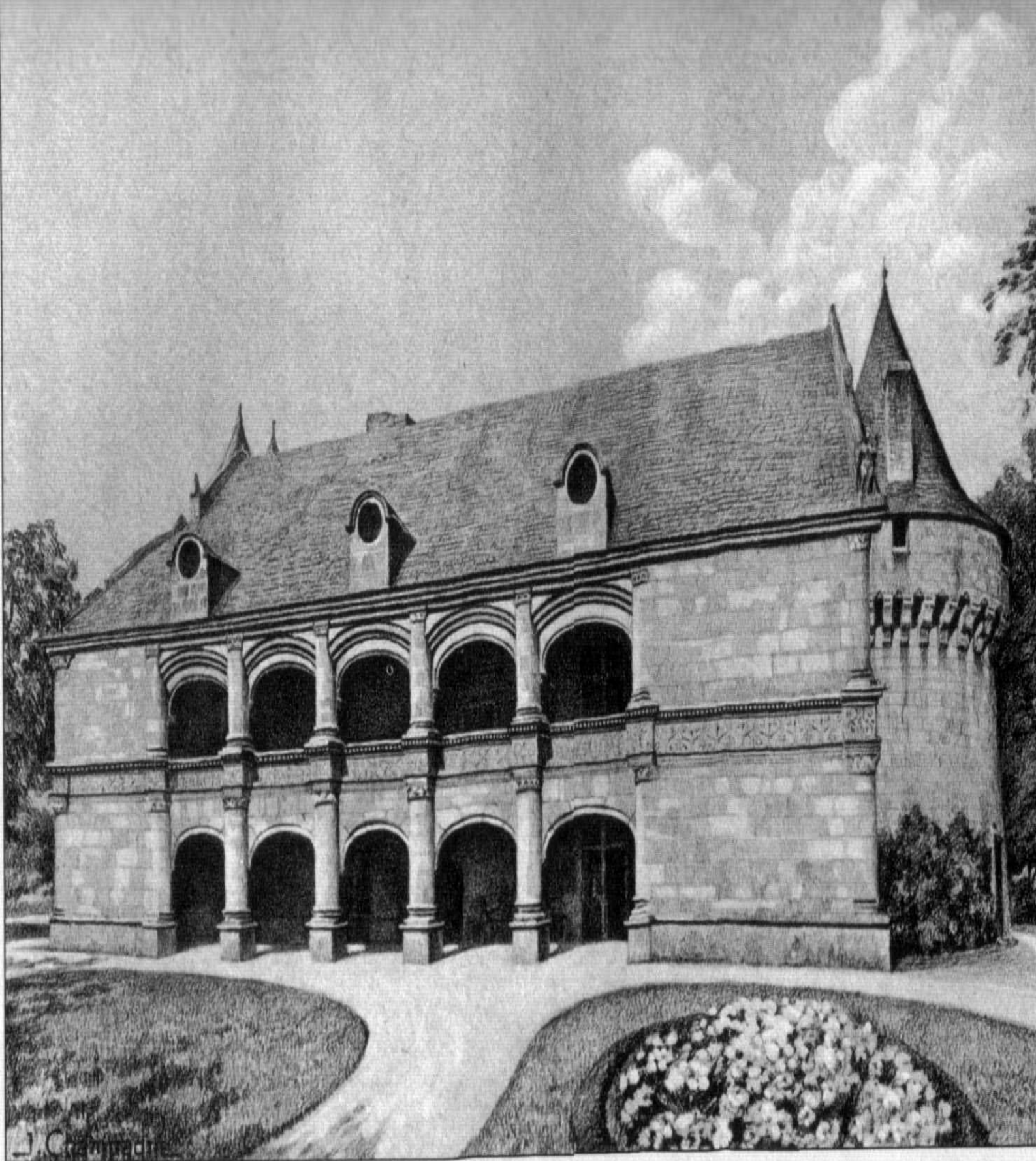
In the Santoine region to which Coulonges-sur-l'Autize, the county town where once stood Louis d'Estissac's beautiful dwelling belongs, the forewarned tourist can discover yet another castle whose preservation and significantly singular decoration renders it even more interesting: the castle of Dampierre-sur-Boutonne (in the French Department of Charente-Inferieure). Built at the end of the 15th century under Francois de Clermont ⁽¹⁾, the castle of Dampierre is presently the property of Dr Texier from Saint-Jean-d'Angely ⁽²⁾. By the abundance and the variety of the symbols which it offers, like so many enigmas, to the sagacity of the seeker, the castle deserves to be better known and we are pleased to particularly commend it to the attention of the disciples of Hermes.

In outer architecture, though elegant and in good taste, remains very simple and presents nothing remarkable; but it is with buildings as it is with certain people: their unobtrusive bearing and the modesty of their appearance only serve to veil that which in them is of a higher essence.

In between round towers covered with machiolated conical roofs lies the Renaissance-style main body of the building whose façade opens onto the outside through ten flattened vaults. Five of them form a colonnade on the ground level while the other five, directly superposed on the lower ones, let the light pour into the second story. These openings light up covered walks giving access to inner rooms and the whole gives the effect of a wide loggia crowning the ambulatory of a cloister. Such is the humble cover to the magnificent picture album of which the stone pages ornament the vaults of the higher gallery (**Plate XXIII**).

While we may know today the name of who built the new buildings destined to replace the old feudal fortress of Chateau-Gaillard ⁽³⁾, we are still ignorant of the unknown and mysterious individual to whom Hermetic philosophers owe the symbolic pieces which they shelter.

It is almost certain, and on this point we share Leon Palustre's opinion, that the paneled ceiling of the higher gallery, where all of Dampierre's fascination lies, was executed between 1545 or 1546 and 1550. Less certain however is the attribution of this work to individuals, no doubt well known, but who nevertheless are total strangers to it, certain authors suggested the emblematic motifs emanated from Claude de Clermont, baron of Dampierre, governor of Ardres, colonel of the Grisons and gentleman of the Privy Chamber. Now, in his *Vie des Femmes Illustres* ⁽⁴⁾, Brantome says that during the war between the king of England and the king of France, Claude de Clermont was ambushed by the enemy and died in 1545. Therefore he could not have been even remotely involved in works undertaken after his death. His wife, Jean de Vivonne, daughter of Andrew de Vivonne, Lord of the Chateignereaye, of Esnandes, and of Arelay, Counselor to and Chamberlain of the king, Seneschal of Poitou, etc., and of Louise de Daillon de Lude, was born in 1520. She became a widow at 20. Her wit, her distinguished personality and her high virtue gained her a reputation such that, just like Brantome de Daillon duLude, was born in 1520. She became a widow at 20. Her wit, her distinguished personality and her high virtue gained her a reputation such that, just like de Brantome who praised the scope of her learning, Leon Palustre ⁽⁵⁾ honors her with being the instigator of the bas-relief of Dampierre. "There", he says, "Jeanne de Vivonne took pleasure in having an entire series of more or less understandable compositions executed by sculptors of rather ordinary talents". Finally, a third attribution is not even worth retaining. Abbot Nogues ⁽⁶⁾, by producing the name of Claude-Catherine de Clermont, daughter of Claude and



DAMPIERRE-SUR-BOUTONNE (CHARENTE-INFÉRIEURE)
The 16th Century Castle

Jeanne de Vivonne, expresses a totally unacceptable opinion, as Palustre says: "This future chatelaine of Dampierre, born in 1543, was but a child at the time the work was being completed".

So, not to be guilty of any anachronism, are we forced to grant the paternity of the symbolic décor of the higher gallery to Jeanne de Vivonne alone. And yet, as convincing as this hypothesis may seem, it is impossible for us to endorse it. We strongly refuse to acknowledge a woman of 25 as the beneficiary of a science demanding more than twice as many years of sustained efforts and persevering studies. Even supposing that, in her prime and in defiance of all philosophical rules, she could have been the recipient of an oral initiation from some unknown Artist, it remains, nonetheless, that she would have had to control, through obstinate and personal toil, the truth of the teaching. Now, nothing is more trying, and more disheartening than to pursue, for many long years, a series of experiments, trials and attempts demanding a constant zeal, and the renouncing of all public matters, relationships, and external preoccupation. Voluntary seclusion, and renouncing the world are indispensable conditions should one wish to acquire, along with practical knowledge, notions of a yet more secret symbolic science, that covers and occults them from the common people. Was Jeanne de Vivonne perhaps subjected to the requirements of an admirable mistress, lavishing infinite treasures, but uncompromising on all her worshippers implicit obedience and staunch loyalty? Nothing in her that we can find justifies such a conclusion. On the contrary, hers is a totally worldly life. Admitted to the court, writes Brantome "at the early age of eight, she was raised there and forget nothing of it; and it was good to hear her speak as I have seen our kings and queens take pleasure in hearing her do so for she knew nothing of it; and it was good to hear her speak as I have seen our kings and queens take pleasure in hearing her do so for she knew everything of her time and of the past; so much so that she was accepted as an oracle. So our most recent king, Henry III of France, made her lady-in-waiting to the queen, his wife". During her stay at the court, she saw five kings succeed to the throne in rapid sequence: Francis I, Henry II, Francis II, Charles IX and Henry III. Her virtue is recognized and well-known to the point of having been respected by the disrespectful Tallamant des Reaux; as for her learning, it exclusively of a historical nature. Facts, anecdotes, chronicles and biographies forming its sole content. In the final analysis, she was a woman with the gift of an excellent memory, who had listened, memorized much, and to such an extent that Brantome, her nephew and historiographer, speaking of Madame de Dampierre, says that "she was a genuine court register". The image is eloquent; Jeanne de Vivonne was a register, no doubt pleasant and instructive for consultants, but she was not anything else. Thrown so young into the intimacy of kings of France, did she even later on inhabit her castle of Dampierre at all? That was what we wondering about while going through Jules Robuchanon's ⁽⁷⁾ beautiful book, when an account by Monsieur Georges Musset, alumnus of the Ecole des Chartres in Paris ⁽⁸⁾ and member of the Societe des Antiquaires de l'Ouest, appeared just in time to solve the problem and serve as a back up to our conviction, "But", writes G. Musset, "some heretofore unpublished documents have surfaced that seem to complicate the issue and produce inconsistencies. A recognition of Dampierre is written to the King because of his castle of Niort, on the 9th of August 1547 at the crowning of Henry II. The vassals are Jacques de Clermont, his independent son, for the bare ownership. The duty consisted of a bow made from the wood of a yew, and a sheaf of arrows without groove. It seems to result from this deed: (1) that Jeanne de Vivonne does not enjoy Dampierre nor her daughter Catherine who owns it; (2) that Claude de Clermont had a younger brother, Francois, who was under age but emancipated in 1547. There are no grounds for supposing that Claude and Francois were one and the same person, since Claude died during the campaign of Boulogne, that ended, as we know, by the treaty signed by Francis I and Henry VIII, on June 7, 1546. What happened then to Francois who isn't mentioned anywhere by Anselm? What happened to this land from 1547

to 1558? What happened to this land from 1547 to 1558? How could, out of such a stunning association of incapacities of ownership, whether usufructaries or under age individuals, emerge such a luxurious dwelling? These are mysteries that we cannot solve. We believe it is a great deal even to be able to glimpse some of the issues at play".

And so the opinion is confirmed --- according to which the philosopher to whom we owe all the embellishments of the castle --- paintings and sculptures --- is unknown to us and will perhaps remain so forever.

(1) *Recueil de la Commission des Arts et Monuments Historiques de la Charente Inferieure*, Vol XIV, Saintes, Frances, 1884.

(2) Dr Jean Texier died May 22, 1953. His son, M. J. Texier, the present owner, specifically told us, in his letter dated January 15, 1965: "I am aware that at the time (1928) you exchanged several letters with my father and that is the reason why I gladly granted your publisher permission to takes several pictures of the castle". We warmly thank M. J. Texier.

(3) "Formerly, we could admire above the threshold of the Maison Richard, rebuilt approximately 15 years ago, a stone of respectable dimensions on which the following Greek word was carved in capital characters: [*** 282-1], in other words, that which is impregnable. It apparently came from the old castle. This stone was later used to build a pillar for the shed". In *Recault de la Commission des Arts et Monuments Historiques de la Charente-Inferieure*, (*Records of the Commission for Art and Historical Monuments of the Lower Charente*), note written by M, Senior, with a forward by M. Fragnaud.

(4) *Life of Illustrious Ladies*.

(5) Leon Palustre: *La Renaissance en France; Aunis et Saintonge (Renaissance on the French regions of Aunis and Saintonge)*, p. 293.

(6) Abbot Nogues: Dampierre-sur-Boutonne. *Monographie Historique at archaologique (Dampierre-sur-Boutonne Historical and Archaeological Monograph)*, Saintes, Fracne, 1883, p. 53.

(7) *Paysages et Monuments du Poitou (Landscapes and Monuments of the Poitou Region)*, photographs by Jules Robuchon, vol. IX: Dampierre-sur-Boutonne, by Georges Musset, Paris, France, 1893, p. 9.

(8) The School of Paleontology and Librarianship and The Society of Antique Dealers of the West of France.

THE CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE II

In a spacious room on the second story, we can notice in particular a large and rather beautiful fireplace, gilded and covered with paintings. Unfortunately, a hideous reddish wash covers, on the main frame of the mantelpiece, the subjects which once decorated it. Only a few isolate letter remains on the lower part. On the other hand, the two sides have kept their ornamentation and make us deeply regret the loss of the main composition. The pattern is the same on both dies. At the top, a forearm appears, the hand of which holds a raised swords and a pair of scales. Toward the middle of the sword, the central part of a floating phylactery is coiled, bearing on the inscription:

DAT. JVSTVS.FRENA.SVPERBIS ⁽¹⁾.

Two golden chains, joining on top of the scale, are connected below one to the collar of a mastiff, and the other to the tether ring of a dragon whose tongue is darting out of its open mouth. Both raise their heads and glance in the direction of the hand. Both scales held rolls of gold coins. The letter L topped by a crown is marked in one of the rolls. On another roll, there is a hand holding smaller scales and underneath the picture of a dragon with a threatening appearance.

Above these large patterns, that is to say, on the uppermost part of the sides, two medallions are painted. The fist depicts a Maltese cross, with fleur-de-lis at its angles; the second bears the effigy of a graceful figurine.

The composition as a whole presents a paradigm of the hermetic science. Mastiff and dragon hold the place of the two material principles assembled and held in check by the gold of the sages, in accordance with the proper ratio and natural equilibrium, such as the image of the scales teaches us. The hand is that of the craftsman, steady when handling the sword--- a hieroglyph for a penetrating, mortifying which modifies the properties of matter --- cautious when apportioning substances according to the rules of the philosophers' weights and measures. As for the rolls of gold coins, they clearly indicate the nature of the final result and one of the objectives of the Work. The mark made up of a crowned L has always been the traditional sign, in graphic notation, to mean projection gold, that is to say, alchemically produced gold.

Just as vivid are the little medallions of which one represents Nature, always to be used as a guide and mentor by the artist, while the other proclaims the qualification of Rose-Cross which the learned author of these various symbols had acquired. The heraldic fleur-de-lis indeed corresponds to the hermetic rose, as an ensign and a coat of arms for the practicing knight who, thanks to divine grace, achieved the philosophers' stone. However, while this emblem brings us proof that the unknown Adept of Dampierre had knowledge, it also convinces us of the futility, the uselessness of any of our attempts to identify his true personality. We know why Rosicrucians used to call themselves invisible; therefore it is likely that, during his lifetime, ours invariably surrounded himself with the indispensable precautions and took all appropriate measures to conceal his identity. He had wanted the man to keep in the background of the science, and his lapidary work to contain no other signature than the high, albeit anonymous, title of Rosicrucian and Adept.

On the ceiling of the same room where the large fireplace stands, there used to be a beam ornamented with this curious Latin inscription:

"Illustrious deeds, a magnanimous heart, a glorious renown which does not end in shame; a modest wealth properly acquired, honorably increased and always considered as a gift of God, here is that which injustice and envy cannot grant you, and which always should be a glory and an example for the family".

About this text already long gone, Dr Texier, the physician, has been kind enough to give us a few precise details: "The inscription about which you speak", he writes us, "was carved on a beam found in a second story room which, because it fell into decrepitude, had to be changed about sixty or eighty years ago. The inscription was recorded in its exact words but the beam fragment where it was written in golden letter was lost. My father-in-law, to whom this castle used to belong, remembers quite well having seen it" ⁽²⁾.

Paraphrasing Solomon in Ecclesiastes 3:13, where it is said that "every man should eat and drink, and enjoy the good of all his labour, it is the gift of God", this fragment defines in a positive way, and is sufficient to explain, the mysterious occupation to which the enigmatic lord of Dampierre was, under cover, devoting himself. In any case the inscription reveals in its author an unconventional wisdom. No labor, whatever it may be, can obtain a better acquired prosperity; the worker receives from nature herself the entire salary he is entitled to, and this salary is computed in proportion to his skill, his efforts and his perseverance. And as practical science that has always been recognized as a genuine gift of God by all the possessors of the Magistry, the fact that this profession of faith considers an acquired fortune as a gift of God is enough to point to its alchemical origin. Its gradual and honorable increase could not, in these conditions, surprise anyone.

Two other inscriptions coming from the same dwelling are worth mentioning here. The first, painted on the mantle of a fireplace, contains a six-line stanza under a work of art composed of the letter H holding two interlaced D's decorated with human faces in profile, that of an old man, and that of a young man. This little piece, cheerfully written, glorifies the happy existence, bearing the stamp of calm and serenity, and of kind hospitality, which our philosopher led in his attractive dwelling.

DVOLCE.EST.LA.BIEN.SVYVRE.
EMMY.SOYET.PRINTANS.SOYET.HYVERS.
SOVBS.BLANCHE.NEIGE.OV.RAMEAVX.VERTS.
QVAND.VRAYS.AMIS.NOVS.LA.FONT.VIVRE.
AINS.LEVR.PLACE.A.TOV.S.EST.ISI.
COMME.AVX.VIEVLS.AVX.LEVNES.AVSSI.

SWEET IS LIFE WHEN IT IS WELL LED,
BE IT SPRING, BE IT WINTER,
UNDER WHITE SNOW OR GREEN BOUGHS,
WHEN TRUE FRIENDS LIVE IT WITH US.
AND EVERYONE'S PLACE IS HERE
THE OLD'S AND YOUNG'S ALIKE.

The Second one, which decorated a larger fireplace covered with ornaments of red, gray and gold, is a simple proverb of a beautiful ethical nature but which the superficial and presumptuous human beings of our time are loath to practice:

SE.COGNESTRE.ESTRE.ET.NON.PARESTRE.

To know oneself, to be and to not show off.

Our Adept is right; knowing oneself is what enables us to acquire the knowledge, the purpose and the meaning of life, the basis of all genuine values, and this power, which raises the hard working man who can acquire it, incites him to live in a modest and noble simplicity, the outstanding virtue of higher minds. It was an axiom that masters used to repeat to their disciples, and through which they signified to them the only means of attaining the highest knowledge: "If you want to know wisdom", they used to say, "know thyself well and you will know it".

(1) The just dampens the proud one.

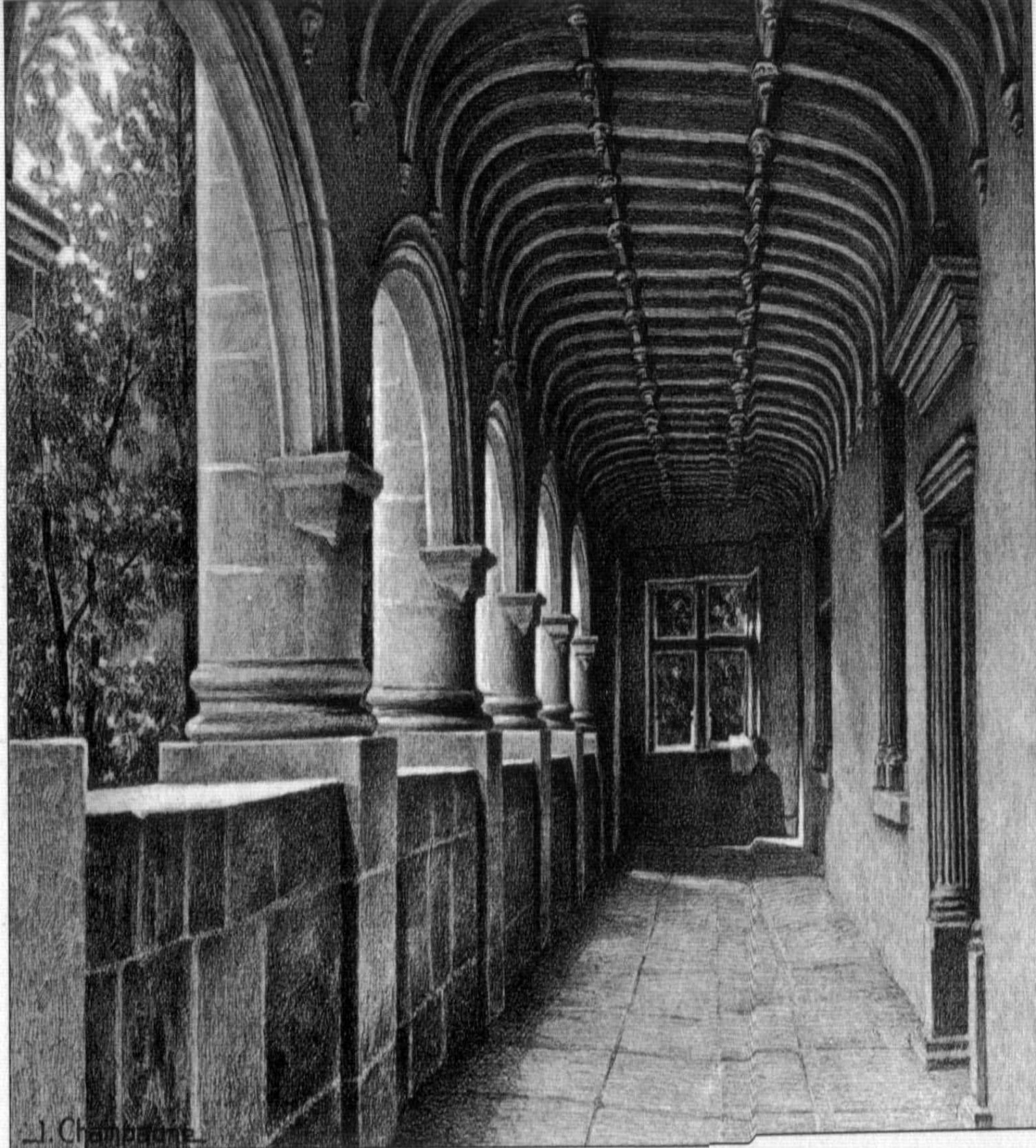
(2) Much later, the wooden slab bearing the inscription which we reproduce was found, amongst other pieces of wood, in a sheep pen used as a separation partition.

THE CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE III

The upper gallery, whose ceiling is so curiously ornamented, takes up, between the two towers, the entire length of the building. As we have mentioned, daylight pours in through five bay windows separated by squat columns, each fitted inside with engaged supports securing the springing of the arches. Two windows with straight transoms and rectilinear lintels open at both ends of the gallery. Transversal ribbed moldings take on the flattened arch form of the bay windows and are crossed by two lengthwise parallel ribbed moldings, thus marking the frame of the panels which are the object of our study (**Plate XXIV**). They were described by Louis Audiat ⁽¹⁾ long before us. However, knowing nothing of the science to which they refer and of the essential cause linking together so many bizarre images, he endowed his book with a character of inconsistency that the figures themselves take on for the layman. When reading the *Epigraphie Santone*, it would seem that whim, fantasy and extravagance presided over its execution. And so the least that can be said about this work is that it does not appear very serious, lacks any depth, is odd, and without any interest save an excessive peculiarity. Certain unaccountable mistakes further add to the unfavorable impression it makes upon us. Thus, an example, the author mistakes a cubic stone, cut, and placed on the water (Series I, Panel 5) for "a ship on rough water"; elsewhere (Series IV, Panel 7) a stooped woman planting pits near a tree becomes for him "a traveler who tramps wearily across a desert". In the first panel of the fifth series --- may our female readers forgive him this involuntary comparison --- he sees a woman in place of the devil himself, hairy, winged, horned, perfectly clear and visible. Such mistakes denote an inexcusable heedlessness in an epigraphist conscious of his responsibility and the accuracy required by his occupation.

According to Dr Texier, to whom we are obliged for this information, the figures of Dampierre were never published in totality. Nevertheless, a reproduction of them exists, drawn after the original and kept at the museum of Saintes. It is to this drawing that we have resorted for some patterns lacking in precision and so as to make our description as thorough as can be.

Apart from the subject which is sculpted in a bas-relief form, almost all the emblematic compositions include an inscription engraved within a phylactery. While the image refers straight to the practical side of the science, the epigraph mainly proposes a moral or philosophical meaning; it appeals to the worker rather than to the work and, using now an apothegm, now a parable, it defines a quality, a virtue the artist must possess, or appoint of doctrine he ought not to ignore. And, by the very fact that they are provided with phylacteries, these figures reveal the scope of their secrecy, and their being assigned to some occult science. In fact, the Greek [*296-1] (*phulakterion*), formed from [*296-2], to keep, maintain, and from [*296-3] (*terein*), to preserve, indicates the function of this ornament, in charging of keeping and preserving the occult and mysterious meaning hidden behind the natural expression of the composition it accompanies. It is the sign, the seal of this Wisdom which is on guard against the wicked, as Plato says: [***296-4] (*Sophia e peri tus ponus phulaktiche* --- Wisdom has been placed above all as guardian). Whether it bears an epigraph or not, it suffices to find a phylactery on any subject to be assured to the seeker and marked by its mere presence. And the truth of this meaning, the reality of this significance are always to be found in the hermetic science termed eternal wisdom by the ancient masters. Therefore, one should not be surprised to find streamers and parchments abundantly represented among the attributes of religious scenes or profane compositions of our great cathedrals as well as in the less restrictive framework of lay architecture.



CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE-SUR-BOUTONNE
The Upper Gallery

PLATE XXIV

Lined up in three rows perpendicular to the axis, the panels of the upper gallery are 93 in number. Of this number, 61 refer to the science, 24 offer monograms intended to separated them into series, 4 represent only geometric ornaments, executed at a later date, and the last 4 show an empty and smooth slab. The symbolic panels where the interest of the ceiling of Dampierre is concentrated, form a set of figures dispatched into seven series. Each series is isolated from the next three panels laid in a transverse line, and alternatively decorated with the monogram of Henry II and the interlaced crescents of Diane de Poitiers or Catherine de Medici, monograms which can be found on many buildings of the same period. We eventually came to the conclusion, a rather surprising one, that most mansions or castles bearing the double D linked to the letter H and the triple crescent have a decoration of indisputable alchemical character. But why are these same dwellings coined by the authors of monographs with the title of "castles of Diane de Poitiers" based on the sole presence of the monogram in question? Yet neither the dwelling of Louis d'Esissac at Coulonges-dur-l'Autize nor that of the Clermonts, both placed under the protection of the king's too famous favorite, ever belonged to her. Furthermore, what reason could be invoked for the monogram and the crescents that could justify their presence among hermetic emblems? To what thought, to what tradition could the initiates of the nobility have yielded when they placed their painted and sculpted hieroglyphic works under the fictitious protection of a king and his concubine --- objects of public disapproval? "Henry II", writes the Abbot of Montgaillard ⁽²⁾, "was a foolish, brutal prince showing a deep lack of concern for the well-being of his subjects; this wicked king was constantly dominated by his wife and his old mistress; he left the reins of the state to them and did not shrink from any of the cruelties exerted on the Protestants. Of him it can be said that he extended the reign of Francis I in matters of political despotism and religious intolerance". It is therefore impossible to admit that well-read philosophers, men of education and high ethics, would have entertained the thought of offering their works as a token of esteem to the royal couple whose debauchery was to render them shamefully famous.

The truth is different, for the crescent belongs neither to Diane de Poitiers nor to Catherine de Medici. It is a symbol issuing from ancient times, known to the Egyptians and the Greeks, used by the Arabs and Saracens long before it was introduced into our Western Middle Ages. It is the attribute of Isis, of Artemis or Diane, of Selene, of Phoebe and of the Moon, the spagyric emblem of silver and the seal of the color white. It has a triple meaning: alchemical, magical, cabalistic, and this triple hierarchy meaning, synthesized in the image of interlaced crescents, embraces the scope of ancient and traditional knowledge. Consequently we should be less surprised to see the symbolic triad represented close to obscure signs, since it provides them with its support and permits to indicate to the investigator the science to which they belong.

As for the monogram, it can easily be explained, and it shows once again how the philosophers have used emblems of known meaning, and endowed them with a special, usually unknown, sense. It was the surest means they had at their disposal to hide from the layman a science figuratively exposed in full view: a revived Egyptian method whose teaching, translated in hieroglyphics on the outer walls of temples, remained worthless to those who did not possess the key. The historical monogram is formed of two D's, intertwined and connected by the letter H, the initial of Henry II. Such at least is the lay formulation of a cipher which veils under its image an altogether different meaning.

It is known that alchemy is based on the physical metamorphoses brought about by the spirit, a designation given to the universal vitality which emanates from the divinity, which maintains life and motion, provokes its arrest or death, evolves the substance and asserts itself as the only life-giver of all that which is. Now, in alchemical notation, the sign of the spirit is

none other than the letter H of the Latins and of the letter eta (H) of the Greeks. We will provide later, when examining one of the panels where this character is depicted with a crown (Series VII, 2), some of its symbolic applications. For the time being, it suffices to say that the spirit, the universal agent, constitutes, in the accomplishment of the work, the main unknown, the determination of which ensures full success. However this unknown, which is beyond all bounds of human understanding, can only be acquired through divine revelation. The masters used to say again and again, "God gives wisdom to whom he pleases and transmits it through the Holy Ghost, the light of the world; that is why the science is said to be a Gift of God, formerly solely for his ministers, hence the name sacerdotal Art which it originally bore". Let us add that during the Middle Ages the Gift of God applied to the Secretum secretorum (Secret of Secrets), which precisely signifies the secret par excellence, that of the universal spirit.

And so, the Donum Dei (Gift of God) revealed knowledge of the science of the Great Work, key to the materializing of the spirit and the light ([*298-1] --- Helios), appears incontestably in the form of the monogram of the double D (Donum Dei) united with the sign for the spirit (H), Greek initial for the sun, the Father of Light, Helios. Nothing could better indicate the alchemical character of the figures of Dampierre than the study of which we shall now proceed to undertake.

(1) Louis Audiat: *Epigraphie Santone et Aunisonne*; Paris, J.B. Dumoulin , and Niort, L. Clouzot, 1870.

(2) Abbot of Montagaillard: *Histoire de France*, vol. I, p. 186; Paris, Moutardier, 1827.

CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE IV

First Series (Plate XXV)

Panel 1 --- Two trees of same size and similar thickness appear next to each other on the same ground; one is green and vigorous ⁽¹⁾, the other inert and dried-up. The streamer which seems to bind them together bears these words:

.SOR.NON.OMBIBUS.AEQVE.

Fate is not equal for all.

This truth, which applies within the limits of human existence, seems to us all the more relative because destiny, whether dismal or successful, easy or unsettling, leads us all, without distinction or privilege, towards death. But if we transpose this truth within the hermetic domain, it takes on a definite positive sense, one which ought to have secured its being chosen by our Adept.

According to the alchemical doctrine, ordinary metals, torn out of their ore bearing earth to satisfy the demands of industry, forced to yield to man's whims, seem in fact to be the victims of a glaring evil spell. As an ore, they lived deep within the rock and slowly evolved toward the perfection of native gold, they are now condemned to die as soon as they are extracted, and perish under the ill-fated action of a reducing fire. The smelting process, while separating them from the nutritive elements associated with the mineralizing elements responsible for maintaining their activity, kills them by fixing the temporary and transitory form which they had acquired. Such is the meaning of the two symbolic trees, one expressing mineral vitality, the other metallic inertia.

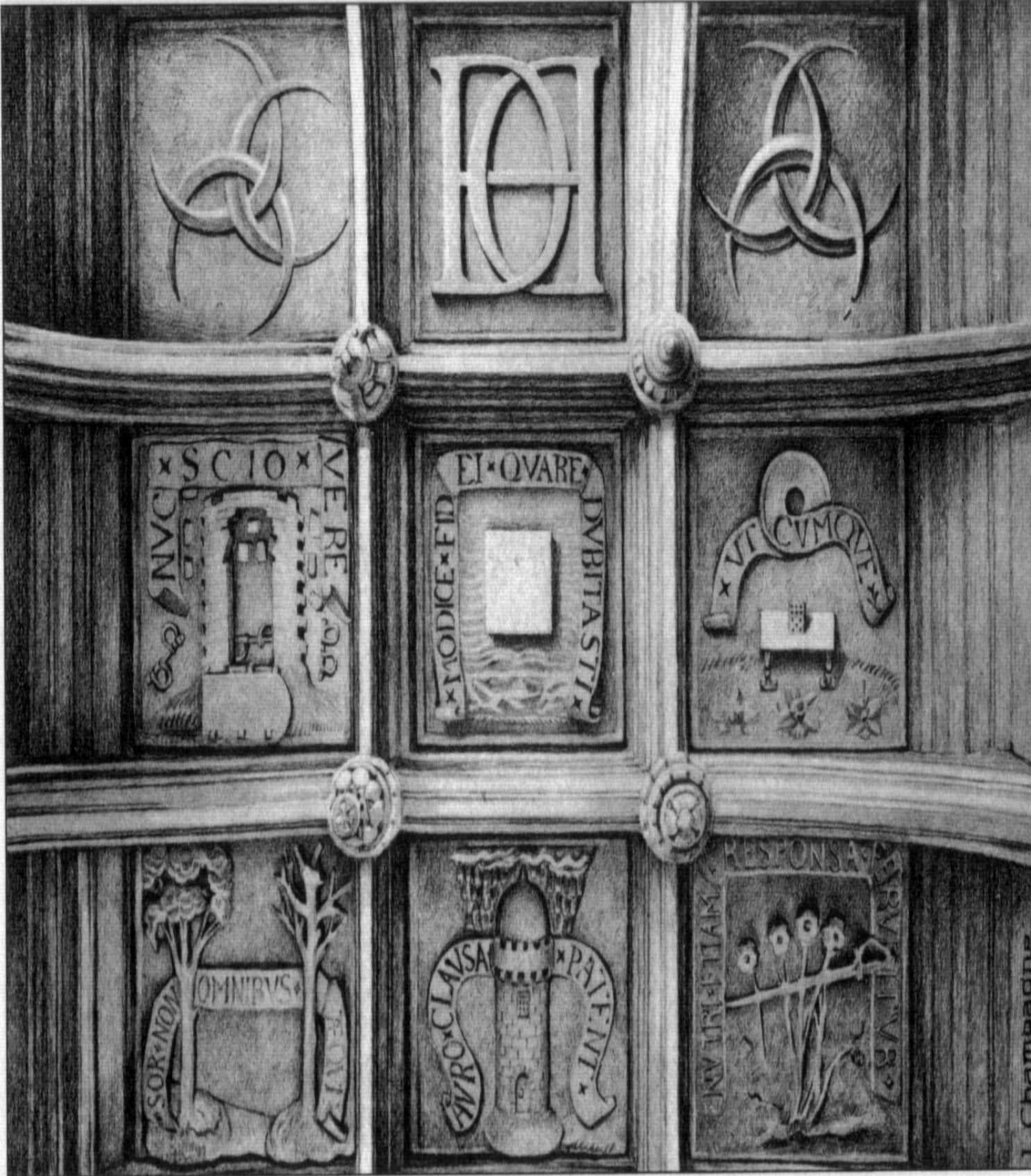
From this simple image, the intelligent and sufficiently well-read investigator of the art's principles will be able to draw useful and profitable conclusions. If he remembers that the old masters recommended to begin the work at the very point where nature completes here; if he knows how to kill the living in order to revive the dead, he will no doubt discover which metal he must take and what mineral he should choose in order to begin his first labor. Then, pondering Nature's operations, he will learn from her the manner of uniting the revived body to another living body --- for life desires life --- and, if he has understood us, he will see with his eyes and touch with his hands the material evidence of a great truth.

These words are perhaps too succinct and we regret it; but our obedience to the rules of traditional discipline does not permit us to be more precise nor to elaborate any further.

Panel 2 --- A fortress, raised on a glaciis, crowned with crenels and machioliations, provided with loopholes, and capped with a dome, is pierced by a narrow barred window and a firmly bolted door. This edifice, of a powerful and forbidding appearance, receives from large clouds a shower which the inscription refers to as a rain of gold:

.AVRO.CLAVSA.PATENT.

Gold opens closed doors.



CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE-SUR-BOUTONNE
Panels of the Upper Gallery - First Series

Everyone knows that. But this proverb, whose application is at the basis of privilege, favoritism and all unfair promotions, cannot have, in a philosopher's mind, the figurative meaning we know it to possess. Corrupting gold is not the point here, but rather the mythical hermetic episode found in the fable of Jupiter and Danae. Poets tell us that this princess, the daughter of Acrisius, king of Argos, was imprisoned in a tower because an oracle had foretold her father that he would be killed by his grandson. Now, the walls of a prison, however thick they may be, could not constitute a real obstacle to a god's will. Zeus, a great lover of romantic episodes and of metamorphoses, ever preoccupied with deceiving Hera's vigilance and enlarging his progeny, noticed Danae. Little troubled by the choice of means, he crept in by her side under the form of a golden shower, and, at the termination of the required time, the prisoner brought forth into the world a son who received the name of Perseus. Acrisius, most unhappy with this news, had mother and child shut up in a chest which was jettisoned. Fishermen found the unusual vessel, carried by the currents all the way to the island of Seriphus, opened it and presented King Polydectes with the contents, who welcomed Danae and Perseus with great hospitality.

Under the guise of this wonderful tale an important secret is hidden, that of the preparation of the hermetic subject or the Work's raw material, and the obtaining of the sulfur, the stone's *primum ens*.

Danae represents our crude mineral, such as it is extracted from the mine. It is the earth of the sages which contains within it the active and hidden spirit, alone capable, says Hermes. Of realizing "by these things the miracle of only one thing". As a matter of fact, the word Danae comes from the Dorian Greek [*303-1] (*Dan*), earth, and [*303-2] (*ae*), breath, spirit. Philosophers teach that their raw material is a fragment of the original chaos and it is indeed what is meant by the name Acrisius, king of Argos and Danae's father: [*303-3] (*Akrisia*), is confusion, disorder; [*303-4] (*Argos*), means coarse, uncultivated, incomplete. As for Zeus, it denotes the sky, the air, and the water; to such extent that the Greeks, to express the action of raining, said: [***303-5] (*Gei o Zeus*), Jupiter sends rain, or, more simply, it rains. Therefore this god appears as the personification of water, of a water capable of penetrating bodies, of a metallic water, for it is of gold or at least golden. It is precisely the case of the hermetic solvent, which, after undergoing fermentation in an oak barrel, assumes, upon decantation, the appearance of liquid gold. The anonymous author of an unpublished 18th century manuscript ⁽²⁾ writes on the subject: "If you let this water run, you will see with your very eyes the gold shining in its first being with all the colors of the rainbow". The very union of Zeus and Danae indicates the manner in which the solvent must be applied; the body, reduced to a fine powder, put to digestion with a small quantity of water, is then dampened, watered little by little, gradually as it becomes absorbed --- a technique the sages called imbibation. Thus a softer and softer paste is obtained which becomes syrupy, oily, and eventually fluid and clear. Then subjected, under certain conditions, to the action of fire, a part of this liquor coagulates into a mass which falls to the bottom and is to be collected with care. This is our precious sulphur, the newborn child, the little king, and our Dauphin (or dolphin) ⁽³⁾, symbolic fish otherwise called echeneis, remora or pilot fish, Perseus or fish of the Red Sea (in Greek [*** 303-6] --- *Perseus*), etc.

Panel 3 --- Four blooming flowers, erect on their stems, are in contact with the cutting edge of a bare saber. This small design has for motto:

.NVTRI.ETIAM.RESPONSA.FERVNTVR.

Likewise develop the announced oracles.

It is a piece of advice given the artist so that, by applying it, he can be assured of properly conducting the coction, or the Magistry's second operation. Nutri etiam responsa feruntur, entrusts him with the spirit of our philosophy by the intermediary of the petrified characters of his work.

These oracles, four in number, correspond to the four flowers or colors which appear during the evolution of the Rebis and reveal outwardly to the alchemist the successive stages of the inner work. These stages, diversely colored, bear the name of Regimens or Reigns. Ordinarily, they are reckoned to be seven. To each regimen the philosophers have attributed one of the higher divinities of the Olympus and one of the celestial planets, whose influence is felt parallel to theirs, at the time they become dominant. According to the widely-held opinion, planets and divinities develop their power simultaneously in a fixed hierarchy. To the reign of Mercury ([*304-1] --- *Hermes* --- basis, ground work), the first stage of the work, succeeds that of Saturn ([*304-2] --- *Chronos* --- the old man, the fool); then Jupiter governs ([*304-3] --- *Zeus* --- union, matrimony), then Diana ([*304-4] --- *Artemis* --- whole, fulfilled), or the Moon, whose shiny robe is now woven of white hair, now made with snow crystals; Venus, vowed to green ([*304-5] --- *Aphrodite* --- beauty, grace), then inherits the throne, but soon Mars chases her away ([*304-6] --- *Ares* --- fit, fixed) and this warlike prince, whose clothes are dyed with coagulated blood, is himself overthrown by Apollo ([*304-7] --- *Apollo* --- the victorious), the Sun of the Magistry, emperor clothed in shiny scarlet, who definitely establishes his sovereignty and power over the ruins of his predecessors ⁽⁴⁾.

Some authors, comparing the colored stages of the coction of the seven says of creation, have coined for the complete labor the expression *Hebdomas hebdomadum*, the Week of weeks, or simply the Great Work, because the alchemist must closely follow, for his microcosmic realization, all the circumstances which accompanied the Great Work of the Creator.

However the various regimens are more or less clear, and vary considerable as far as duration and intensity is concerned. So the masters limited themselves to mentioning only the four essential and preponderant colors because they present more sharpness and permanence than the others, namely: black, white, yellow or citrine, and red. These four flowers of the hermetic garden must be cut successively, in sequence and at the end of their flowering, which explains the presence of the weapon in our bas-relief. Consequently, too much haste is to be feared, in the vain hope of shortening the duration, sometimes quite long, by exceeding the degree of heat necessary for the regimen of the time. The ancient authors advise prudence and warn apprentices against a too detrimental impatience; *praecipitatio a diabolo* (precipitous action goes to the devil), they say; for in seeking to reach the goal too quickly, they only succeed in burning the flowers of the compost and provoking the irremedial loss of the work. It is therefore better, as the Adept of Dampierre teaches, to develop the oracles, which are the colored predictions or forebodings of the regular operation, with patience and perseverance, for as long as nature may demand it.

Panel 4 --- An old demolished tower, whose door has been yanked out, allows free access. This is how the image maker represented the open prison. Inside one can still see a pair of shackles in position, as well as three stones shown in the upper part. Two other shackles, extracted from the prison, can be seen besides the ruin. This composition marks the completion of Geber's three stones or medicines, obtained sequentially and designated by the philosophers by the names of philosophical Sulphur for the first; Elixir or potable Gold for the second; Philosopher's Stone, Absolute or Universal Medicine for the last. Each one of these stones has to undergo coction in the Athanor, the prison of the Great Work, and this is the

reason why the last pair of shackles is still sealed inside. The two preceding ones, having accomplished their time of "mortification and penance", have left their fetters, visible on the outside.

The small bas-relief has for motto the saying of the apostle Peter (Acts 12:11), who was miraculously delivered from his prison by an angel:

.NV(N)C.SCIO.VERE.

Now I know of a surety!

Speech of sheer joy, outburst of intimate satisfaction, cry of cheerfulness which the Adept utters before the certainty of the marvel. Until then, doubt could yet have assailed him; but in the presence of the perfect and tangible realization he no longer fears error; he has discovered the way, recognized the truth, inherited the Donum Dei (Gift of God). Nothing of the great secret is unknown to him any longer. Alas! How many among the crowd of seekers can congratulate themselves on reaching the goal, on seeing with their eyes the prison opening up, a prison forever closed for the greatest number of them!

The prison also serves as an emblem of the imperfect body, initial subject of the Work, in which the aqueous and metallic soul is firmly attached and held. "It is this imprisoned water", says Nicolas Valois ⁽⁵⁾, "that unceasingly cries out: Help me, and I shall help you, that is, release me from my prison, and if one day you can liberate me, I shall make you master of the fortress where I am. And so the water locked up in this body is of the same water-nature as that which we gave it to drink, which is called Mercury Trismegistus, and that Parmenides understands when he says: Nature contains Nature. For this imprisoned water revels in its companion who comes to deliver it from its iron shackles, blends with it and finally, converting the same prison into themselves, rejecting that which is contrary to them --- and that is the preparation --- are both converted into mercurial and permanent water. It is therefore right that our divine Water is called the Key, Light, Diana who shines in the thick of night. For it is the entrance to the entire Work and that which illuminates mankind".

Panel 5 --- For having ascertained it experimentally, the philosophers certify that their stone is nothing else but a complete coagulation of mercurial water. The fact is translated by our bas-relief, where we see the cubic stone of ancient Freemasons float on the sea waves. Although such an operation seems impossible, it is nevertheless natural because our mercury carries within itself the sulphurous principle, rendered soluble, to which it owes its subsequent coagulation. It is, however, unfortunate that the extremely slow action of this potential agent does not allow the observer to register the least sign of any reaction whatsoever in the beginning of the work. This is the cause of many artists' failure, who, quickly disappointed, abandon a difficult work which they deem to be in vain, although they have followed the right path and operated on the proper materials, canonically prepared. To them are addressed the words of Jesus, walking on the waters, to Peter, and which St Matthew recounts (Matt. 14:31):

.MODICE.FIDEI.QVARE.DVBITASTO.

O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?

In truth we cannot know anything without the help of faith, and whosoever does not possess it cannot undertake anything. We have never seen skepticism and doubt build anything stable, noble or durable. We must often remember the Latin saying: Mens agitat molem (The mind

puts the mass into motion), for it is the deep conviction in this truth that will lead the wise worker to the happy end of his labor. It is from it, from this stout faith, that he will draw the virtues indispensable for the solution of this great mystery. The term is not exaggerated: we indeed find ourselves before a real mystery. The term is not exaggerated: we indeed find ourselves before a real mystery, as much by its development contrary to chemical laws, as by its obscure mechanism --- a mystery which the most learned scientist and the most expert Adept are unable to explain. For it is so true that nature in her simplicity seems to delight in proposing enigmas, before which our logic recoils, our reason gets confused, and our judgment misled.

Now the cubic stone, which the industrious nature engenders out of water alone --- the universal matter of the Peripatics --- and of which the art must sculpt the six facets according to the rules of occult geometry, appears in a formative stage in a curious bas-relief of the 17th century decorating the fountain of Vertbois in Paris (**Plate XXVI**).

As the two subjects are closely related, we will study here the more detailed Parisian emblem, thus hoping to cast some light on the symbolic expression of the image in Saintonge, which is too concise.

Built in 1633 by the Benedictine monks of St Martin-des-Champs, this fountain was originally erected inside the priory leaning against the surrounding wall. In 1712 the monks offered it to the city of Paris, for public use, along with the grounds needed to rebuild it, provided "that the site would be established in one of their convent's ancient towers and that an outer door would be placed there" ⁽⁶⁾. The fountain was thus placed against the so-called Tower of Vertbois, located on rue St Martin and took the name of St Martin's fountain which it kept for more than a century.

The small structure, restored at the expense of the government in 1832, is made up of "a shallow, rectangular niche flanked by two Doric pilasters, with vermiculated embossments, which support an architraved cornice. On the cornice is built a kind of small helmet crowned by a winged cartouche. A sea conch tops the cartouche. The upper part of the niche is occupied by a frame in the center of which a vessel is sculpted" ⁽⁷⁾. The stone bas-relief measures 80 cm in height by 105 cm in width; the author is unknown.

And so it is that all the descriptions of the fountain of Vertbois, in all likelihood copied one from the other, are content to mention without further description, a vessel as the main motif. The drawing by Moisy, who was commissioned to illustrate Amaury Duval's account, doesn't enlighten us any further. His purely fanciful vessel, represented in profile, bears no trace of its singular freight, and one would seek in vain among the winding of marine volutes the large and beautiful dolphin accompanying it. Moreover, a good many people, unconcerned about details, see in this subject the heraldic ship ⁽⁸⁾ of Paris without suspecting that it proposes to the inquiring mind the enigma of an altogether different truth and of a less general order. True, the accuracy of our remark could be questioned, and, where we identify an enormous stone, trimmed to the ship of which it is an integral part, one could but notice an ordinary package of some kind of merchandise. In this case however, one would be at a loss to explain the raised sail, incompletely brailed up on the mainmast's yard, a peculiarity which sheds light on the unique and voluminous package, thus unveiled on purpose. Hence is the intention of the work's creator manifest; it is an occult cargo, normally veiled to indiscreet surveys, rather than a package traveling on the deck.



PARIS - MUSEUM AND COLLEGE OF ARTS AND CRAFTS
Original Bas-relief of the Fountain of Vertbois (1633)

PLATE XXVI

Furthermore, viewed from the rear, the ship seems to move away from the onlooker and shows that its displacement is ensured by the mizen-sail ⁽⁹⁾, exclusive of the others. Alone it has the wind dead aft; alone, it transmits the energy of the ship gliding over the water. Now the cabalists write artimon (mizzen-mast) and pronounce antemon or antimony, a vocable behind which they hide the name of the subject of the sages. Anthemon in Greek means flower, and it is known that the raw material is called the flower of all the metals; it is the flower of flowers (flos florum); the root of this word, [*311-1] (anthos) also conveys youth, glory, beauty, the most noble part of things, everything that possesses luster and shines like fire. We should not be surprised that Basil Valentine in his *Triumphal Chariot of Antimony* gave to the prime substance of the particular work he describes Fire Stone. As long as it remains fixed to the hermetic ship ⁽¹⁰⁾, this stone, as we have said, must be considered as being in the process of elaboration. It is therefore essential to help it pursue the crossing so that neither tempests nor rocks ⁽¹¹⁾ nor the thousand incidents of the journey can delay its arrival at the blessed haven its traveler, to anticipate, to avert possible causes of shipwreck, to maintain the vessel loaded with the precious cargo straight on its route, such is the task of the artisan. This progressive, slow development explains why the stone is represented here in the appearance of a roughhewn block meant to receive the ultimate cutting in order to become our cubic stone. The cables fastening it to the ship clearly indicate, by their being crossed on its visible facets, the transitory condition of its evolution. It is known that the cross in the speculative order is figurative of the spirit, the dynamic principle, while it is used, in the practical domain, as the graphic sign for the crucible. Within it, within this vessel, the concentration of the mercurial water is brought about by bringing together its constituent molecules under the will of the metallic spirit and owing to the permanent help of fire. For spirit is the only force capable of changing dissolved bodies into new compact masses, in the same way that it compels crystals born of mother solutions to take on the specific, invariable form by which we can identify them. This is why the philosophers have compared the molecular binding of the mercurial solid, under the secret action of spirit, to that of a bag firmly compressed by criss-crossed bindings. The stone appears tied like a schina (from the Greek [*311-2] ---*sekadzo* --- to lock, to close) and this corporification is made perceptible by the cross, the image of the Passion, i.e., during work at the crucible, each time that heat is cautiously applied at the required degree and following the appropriate rhythm. We should then make explicit sense of cable, which the Greeks called [*311-3] --- *kalos* --- homonymous with the adverb [*311-3] --- *kalos* --- meaning in an appropriate and effective manner. It is the most critical stage of the work, the one when the stone's first coagulation, greasy and light, makes its appearance on the surface and floats on the waters. At that time, we must redouble precaution and prudence in the application of fire if we don't want to redden it prematurely and precipitate it. At first it manifests in the shape of a thin film, very fast broken, of which the fragments detached from the edges shrink, join together, thicken, and take on the form of a flat iron --- the isle of the Cosmopolite and the mythical land of Delos --- animated with gyratory movements and subjected to ceaseless shiftings. This isle another image of the hermetic fish, born from the sea of the Sages --- our mercury that Hermes calls mare patens -- - the pilot fish of the Work, the first solid state of the embryonic stone. Some have called it echeneis, according to legend, held back and fixed the largest of ships, the dolphin, whose head we see emerging in our bas-relief, possesses just as positive a meaning. Its Greek name, [*312-1] (*delphis*), indicates the matrix, and no one ignores that philosophers call mercury the receptacle and matrix of the stone.

Nevertheless, and so that no one is mistaken, let us say once more that we are not at all speaking of common mercury here, although its liquid quality could put us on a false trail and allow comparison with the secret water, the metallic humid radical. Being the masterful initiate that he was, Rabelais ⁽¹²⁾ gives in a few words the true characteristics of the

philosophical mercury. In his description of the subterranean temple of the Holy bottle (*Pantagruel*, Bk. 5, Ch. 42)⁽¹³⁾, he speaks of a circular fountain which occupies the center and deepest part of the temple. Around this fountain stand seven columns "these are the stones", says the author, "assigned by the ancient Chaldeans and magi to the seven heavenly planets; and in order that we should understand this in a less subtle sense, above the first and exactly perpendicular to the center of the sapphire hung a figure of Saturn holding his scythe with a golden crane at his feet, most cunningly enameled in the proper colors of Saturnine bird, in their proper order. Above the second, or hyacinthine, was Jupiter in Jovetian tin, facing left, with a golden eagle enameled in its natural colors on his breast. Above the third was Phoebus in refined gold, with a white cock on his right hand. Above the fourth, in Corinthian⁽¹⁴⁾ bronze, Mars with a lion at his feet. Above the fifth Venus in copper, the same metal as that of which Aristonides made the statue of Athamas. At her feet was a dove. Above the sixth was mercury in quicksilver, fixed, firm and malleable with a stork at his feet". The text is categorical and cannot lend itself to misunderstanding. The mercury of the sages, as all authors certify, presents itself as a body of metallic appearance, with the consistency of a solid, and consequently immobile compared to quicksilver, of mediocre volatility in the fire, and finally liable to fix itself by a simple coction in a sealed vessel. As for the stork which Rabelais attributes to mercury, its meaning is drawn from the Greek word [*313-1] (*pelargos*), stork, formed from [*313-2] (*pelos*), pallid brown or black, and [*313-3] (*argos*), white, which are two colors of the bird and of the philosophical mercury; [*313-1] (*pelargos*) also designates a pot made of white and black clay, the emblem of the hermetic vase, i.e., of mercury whose water, alive and white, loses its light, its brightness, mortifies itself and becomes black, surrendering its soul to the stone's embryo that is born from its decomposition and is nourished by its ashes. So as to bear testimony to the fact that the fountain of Vertbois was originally consecrated to the philosophical water, the mother of all metals and basis of the sacred Art, the Benedictine monks of St Martin-des-Champs had the diverse attributes relative to this fundamental liquor sculpted on the cornice which serves as a support to the bas-relief. Two oars and one caduceus intercrossed bear Hermes' petasus, represented under the modern form of a winged helmet, upon which a little dog watches. Some ropes coming out of the visor spread their coils on the oars and the winged wand of the god of the Work. The Greek [*313-4] (*plate*) by which the oar⁽¹⁵⁾ was designated simultaneously proposes the meaning of vessel and of winnowing basket. The latter is a kind of wicker shell attributed to Mercury and which the cabalist writes "vent" (wind)⁽¹⁶⁾. This is why the Emerald Table, speaking of the stone, allegorically conveys that "the wind carried it in its belly". This "van" (winnowing basket) is none other than the matrix, the vessel carrier of the stone, the emblem of mercury principal subject of our bas-relief. As for the caduceus, it is well known that it is the property of the messenger of the gods with the winged helmet and talaria. We will only say that the Greek word [*314-1] (*kerukeion*), caduceus, by its etymology recalls the cock, [*314-2] (*keruss*), consecrated to Mercury as the herald of the light. All these symbols evidently converge towards one and the same object, also indicated by the small dog positioned on top of the small helmet, whose special meaning ([*314-3] --- *kranos* --- head, summit) marks the important part, in other words the culminating point of the Art, the key to the Great Work. Noel, in his *Dictionnaire de la Fable*, writes that "the dog was consecrated to Mercury as the most vigilant and most clever of all the gods". According to Pliny, the flesh of young dogs and served at the meals prepared for them. The image of the dog positioned on the helmet, shield of the head, furthermore constitutes a genuine rebus still suitable to mercury. It is a figurative translation of cynocephalus ([*314-4] --- *kunokephalos* --- that which has a dog's head), a mystical form highly worshipped by the Egyptians, who granted it to a few higher deities, and especially to the god Thoth, who later became the Hermes of the Greeks, the Trismegistus of the philosophers, the Mercury of the Romans.

Panel 6 --- A gambling die is placed on a little garden table; in the foreground grow three herbaceous plants. As sole sign this bas-relief bears the Latin adverb:

.VTCVMQVE.

That is to say, i.e., in an analogous fashion, which could lead us to believe that the discovery of the stone might be due to chance and that knowledge of the Magistry would remain dependent on a fortunate cast of the dice. But we know for a fact that the science, the true gift of God, the spiritual light obtained through revelation, cannot be prone to such hazards. Not that one could not fortuitously discover, in this case as in any other, the flick of the wrist required by such a difficult operation; however, of alchemy amounted only to the acquisition of a special technique, of some laboratory artifice, it would amount to very little and would not exceed the value of a simple formula. Now, the science goes much beyond the synthetic fabrication of precious metals, and the philosophers' stone itself is but the first positive step enabling the Adept to raise himself all the way to the most sublime knowledge. Even if we remain in the physical domain, which is that of material manifestations and fundamental certainties, we can assert that the Work is not subject to the unexpected. It has its laws, principles, conditions, secret agents, and is the result of too many combined actions and diverse influences to obey empirical laws. It must be unveiled, its process must be understood, its causes and its accidents well known before proceeding with its implementation. And whoever cannot see it "in spirit" wastes his time and his energy in wishing to find it through practice. "The wise man's eyes are in his head", says Ecclesiastes 2:14, "but the fool walketh in darkness". The gambling die therefore has another esoteric meaning. Its shape, which is that of the cube ([*315-1] --- *kubos* --- gambling dice, cube), designates the cubic or chipped stone, our philosophers' stone and the cornerstone of the Church. But to be properly raised, this stone requires three successive repetitions of the same series of seven operations, which brings the total to 21 operations. This number corresponds exactly to the sum of the points marked on the die's six faces, since by adding up the first seven numbers one obtains 21. And the three series of seven are once again arrived at by adding up the same numbers of points by boustrophedon writing⁽¹⁷⁾:

1 -- 6 -- 3
6 -- 5 -- 4

Positioned at the intersections of the sides of an inscribed hexagon, these numbers will translate the circular motion appropriate to the interpretation of another figure, emblematic of the Great Work, that of the serpent Ouroboros, *aut serpens qui caudam devoravit* (the Ouroboros serpent, or the serpent which devours its tail). In any case, this arithmetic figure, in perfect agreement with the work, consecrates the attribution of the cube or die to the symbolic expression of our mineral quintessence. It is the Isiac table carried out by the cubic throne of the great goddess. By analogy, it is therefore sufficient to throw the die thrice on the table --- which amounts in praxis to redissolving the stone three times --- to obtain the latter with all its qualities. These are three growing stages which the artist has represented here by three plants. Finally, the reiterations essential to the perfection of the hermetic labor provide the reason for the composition of the hieroglyphic book of Abraham the Jew, Flamel tells us, of three times seven leaves. Likewise, a splendid illuminated manuscript, made at the beginning of the 18th century (18), contains 21 painted figures, each conforming to the 21 operations of the Work.

(1) At the foot of this tree in full foliage, the soil has been dug in the shape of a basin, so as to better retain the water that is poured. In the same way, the metal, dead by reduction, will be revived through frequent imbibitions.

(2) *La Clef du Cabinet Hermetique (The Key to the Hermetic Cabinet)*, "manuscript copied from the original belonging to M. Desaint, physician. Rue Hyacinth in Paris".

(3) Translator's Note: Traditionally in French history, since 1349, the heir to the king of France, usually the first male offspring, was called the Dauphin, because he reigned over the Dauphine in the Alps, as the heir to the kings of England reigns over Wales. Dauphin in French also means dolphins, which is no longer considered a fish nowadays but a mammal.

(4) We restrict ourselves to enumerate the successive stages of the second Work without proposing a particular analysis. Great Adepts, and Philalethes particularly in his *Introitus*, have provided a thorough study of the subject. Their descriptions reveal such awareness of the subject that it would be impossible for us to say more or to say it better.

(5) Nicolas Flamel: *Les Cinq Livres (The Five Books)*, Book I: De la Clef du Secrets des Secrets, Ms., op cit.

(6) *Fontaines de Paris (Fountains of Paris)*, drawn by Moisy. Captions and comments by Amaury Duval, Paris, 1812.

(7) *Inventaire General des Richesses d'Art de la France. Paris. Monuments civils (Comprehensive Survey of the Art Treasures of France. Paris. Secular Monuments)*, Paris, Plon, 1879, vol. 1.

(8) Translator's Note: The author uses the word "nef" in French which means both a ship and the nave of a cathedral.

(9) Translator's Note: Mizen-sail is in French "voile d'artimon".

(10) Translator's Note: The word "nef" is used here, meaning both a ship and the nave of a cathedral.

(11) Translator's Note: The term "ecueil" used in French also means pitfalls.

(12) His works are signed by the pseudonym Alcofribas Nasier, the anagram of Francois Rabelais, followed by the title Abstractor of Quintessence, which in the Middle Ages used to designate in the popular language the alchemists of the time. The famous doctor and philosopher unquestionably declares himself to be an Adept and a Rosicrucian and put his writings under the aegis of the sacred Art. Moreover, in the Prologue to *Gargantua*, Rabelais indicates rather clearly that his work belongs to the category of hermetic and acroamatic closed books, the understanding of which requires an extensive knowledge of symbols.

(13) *Garagantua and Patagrue*, by Rabelais; Translated by J.M. Cohen, Penguin Classics, 1955.

(14) The attribution of bronze to Mars proves that Rabelais knew the alchemical correspondence between planets and metals perfectly. In Greek, [*313-4] (*kalkos*), meaning either copper or bronze, was used by the ancient Hellenic poets to define not copper or one of its compounds, but indeed iron. The author is thus right to assign it to the planet Mars. As for the Corinthian bronze, Pliny asserts that it presented itself under three forms. It has sometimes the luster of silver, sometimes that of gold, and could also be the result of an alloy of gold, silver and copper in approximately equal ratios. This last bronze was believed to have been accidentally produced by the fusion of precious metals with copper during the Corinth fire started by Mummius (146 BC).

(15) In phonetic cabala, *rame* (French for oar), equivalent to *aviron* (French for paddle), also designates the philosophical water. [*313-5] (*rama*), used for [*313-6] (*rasma*), signifies sprinkling, watering, from the root [*313-7], meaning to flow.

(16) Translator's Note: "Van" (winnowing basket) and "vent" (wind) have the same pronunciation in French.

(17) Translator's Note: Boustrophedon, an ancient form of writing in which the lines run alternately from right to left and left to right.

(18) *La Generation et Operation du Grand-Oeuvre (The Generation and Operation of the Great Work)*, manuscript from the Palais des Arts Library, in Lyons, France, #88 (Delandine, 1899), folio.

THE CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE V

Second Series (Plate XXVII)

Panel 1 --- Thick clouds intercept the light of the sun and cast a shadow over a wild flower accompanied by the motto:

.REVERTERE.ET.REVERTER.

Return, and I shall return.

This quite legendary herbaceous plant was called Baraas by the Ancients. It was appropriately found on the flanks of Mt Lebanon above the path leading to Damascus (i.e., cabalistically, leading to mercury as the feminine principle: [*319-1], *Damar*, woman, wife). It was seen blooming solely in the month of May, when Spring removes from the earth its shroud of snow. As soon as night fell, says Noel, "the plant starts to burst into flames and gives off a light like a small torch; but as soon as the day appears, this light disappears, and the herb becomes invisible; even the leaves that we have wrapped in handkerchiefs are no longer there, which sanctions the opinion of those who say that this plant is haunted by demons, because according to them it possesses an occult property that breaks charms and spells. Others assert that it has the power to transmute metals into gold, which is the reason why the Arabs call it the herb of gold; but they would not dare to pluck it or even come near it because it is said that they have experienced, several times, that this plant causes the sudden death of anyone who plucks it from the earth without taking the necessary precautions, and, since they are ignorant of these precautions, they leave it aside and don't touch it".

From this little theme, the artifice of the dissolution of the sulphur by the mercury is esoterically drawn: the plant expresses the vegetative virtue of the latter and the sun, the fiery nature of the former. The operation is all the more important because it leads to the acquisition of the philosophical mercury, a living, animated substance derived from a pure sulphur, radically united to the primitive and celestial water. We have previously stated that the outer mark allowing the certain identification of this water is a starred and radiant shape which coagulation caused to appear on its surface. Furthermore the astral signature of the mercury, as it was common to call the mark in question, asserts itself with even more clarity and vigor as the animation progresses and becomes more complete.

The two paths of the Work require two different manners of undertaking the animation of the initial mercury. The first belongs to the brief way and requires only one technique by which the fixed is gradually dampened --- because any dry matter avidly drinks its own humidity --- until the repeated affusion of the volatile on the body causes the compound to swell and turn into a pasty or syrupy mass, as the case may be. The second method consists on digesting the totality of the sulphur in three or four times its weight in water, decanting the resulting solution, then drying up the residue and reiterating the operation with a proportional quantity of fresh mercury. When the dissolution is complete, the feces, if any, are separated and the collected liquors are subjected to a slow distillation in a bath. Thus the superfluous humidity is released, leaving the mercury at the required consistency without any loss of its qualities, and ready to undergo hermetic coction.

This second practice is that which our bas-relief symbolically expresses.



CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE-SUR-BOUTONNE
 Panels of the Upper Gallery - Second Series

It can easily be understood that the star --- the outer manifestation of the inner sun --- recurs each time a fresh portion of mercury is bathing the undissolved sulphur and the latter immediately ceases to be visible only to reappear during decantation, i.e., at the departure of the astral matter. "Return", says the fixed, "and I shall return". In seven successive repetitions the clouds conceal from view now the star, now the flower, according to the phases of the operation, so that the artist can never, in the course of the work, glimpse simultaneously the two elements of the compound. And this truth happens to be confirmed until the end of the Work, since the coction of the philosophical mercury --- otherwise called heavenly body or star of the wise --- transforms itself into fixed sulphur, the fruit of our emblematic plant, whose seed is thus multiplied in quality, quantity and virtue.

Panel 2 --- At the center of this panel a fruit, which is usually taken to be a pear, but could as likely be an apple or a pomegranate, draws its meaning from the caption beneath which it appears:

.DIGNA.MERCES.LABORE.

Work worthily rewarded.

This fruit is none other than the hermetic gem, the philosophers' stone of the Great Work or the Medicine of the ancient sages, also called the Absolute, Little Coal or precious Carbuncle (carbunculus), the shining sun of our microcosm and the star of eternal wisdom.

It is a double fruit for it is picked from the Tree of Life when specially reserved for therapeutic uses, and from the Tree of Knowledge if the preferred use is metallic transmutation. These two properties correspond to two states of the same product, the first characterizing the red stone, translucent and diaphanous, destined for medicine as potable gold, and the second, the yellow stone, whose metallic orientation and fermentation by means of natural gold have rendered it opaque. For this reason, De Cyrano Bergerac ⁽¹⁾, in his description of the emblematic tree at the foot of which he rests, endows the fruit of the magistry with two colors. "It was", he writes, "a plain Country, and so open that as far as my sight could reach, I did not discover so much as one Bush; and nevertheless when I awoke, I found myself under a Tree, in respect of which the tallest Cedars would but appear as Grass. The Trunk of it was of Massive Gold, its Branches of Silver, and its Leaves of Emeralds, which upon the resplendent Verdure of their precious surface, represented, as in a Looking-Glass, the Images of the Fruit that hand about them. But judge ye whether the fruit owed anything to the Leaves; the enflamed Scarlet of a large Carbuncle, composed one half of each of them; and the other was in suspense, whether it held its matter of a Chrysolite, or of a piece of gilt Amber; the blown Blossoms were large Roses of Diamonds, and oriental Pearls the Buds".

According to the artisan's skill, care, and prudence, the philosophical fruit of the tree of knowledge shows a more or less important virtue. For it is undeniable that the philosophers' stone used for the transmutation of metals is never endowed with the same power. Historical projections provide us with certain evidence of it. In the operation performed by J.B. van Helmont in his laboratory at Vilvorde near Brussels in 1618, the stone transmuted into gold 18,740 times its weight in flowing mercury. Richtausen, with the help of a product given by Labujardiere, obtained a result equivalent to 22,334 times per unit. The projection achieved by Seton in 1603 at the house of the merchant Koch of Frankfurt-am-Main was acted on a proportion equal to 1,155 times. In Dippel's retort, the powder Lascaris gave to Dierbach transmuted approximately 600 times its weight of quicksilver. However, another piece given

by Lascaris displayed more efficacy; in the operation performed at Vienna in 1716 in the presence of Counselor Pantser von Hess, Count Charles-Ernest von Rappach, Count Joseph von Wurben and Freudenthal, and the brothers Count and Baron von Metternich, the ratio reached a power in the vicinity of ten thousand. Furthermore, it is not useless to know that the maximum production is achieved by the use of mercury, and that the same quality of stone gives variable results depending upon the nature of the metals used as the basis for the projection. The author of *Letters of the Cosmopolite* affirms that if one part of Elixir converts into perfect gold a thousand parts of common mercury, it will only transform twenty parts of lead, thirty of tin, fifty of copper and one hundred of silver. As for the white stone, it will, in the same degree of multiplication, act on approximately half of these quantities.

But while the philosophers spoke little of the variable yield of the chrysopeus, on the other hand they displayed more prolixity toward the medical properties of the Elixir, as well as on the surprising effects that it enables one to obtain in the plant kingdom.

"The white elixir", says Batsdorff ⁽²⁾, "enables marvels on illnesses of all animals and especially on those women suffer from, for it is the true potable moon of the Ancients". The anonymous author of *The Key to the Great Work* ⁽³⁾ mentioning Batsdorff's text once more, asserts that "this medicine possesses other even more incredible virtues. When it is at the white stage of the Elixir, it has so much sympathy with women that it can renew their bodies and render them as robust and vigorous as they were in their youth. For this effect, a bath is first prepared with several fragrant herbs with which they should scrub themselves clean; then they go into a second bath without herbs, but in which 3 grains of the white elixir were dissolved in a pint of wine spirit and then poured into the water. They remain in this bath for a quarter of an hour, after which, without drying themselves, a great fire is to be prepared to dry this precious liquor. The ladies then feel so strong within themselves, and their body is rendered so white that they could not imagine it without having experienced it. Our godfather Hermes agrees with this operation, but besides these baths, desires that, at the same time and for seven consecutive days, this Elixir be taken internally; and he adds, if a lady does the same thing every year, she will live exempt from all diseases to which other ladies are subject without experiencing any discomfort".

Huginus a Barma certifies that "the stone fermented with gold can be used in medicine in this manner: one scruple or 24 grains are to be taken, dissolved according to the art in two ounces of spirit of wine, and two to three and up to four drops will be prescribed depending on the illness' requirements, in a little wine or in some other suitable vehicle" ⁽⁴⁾. According to the ancient authors, all ailments are radically healed in one day that lasted for a month; in twelve days if they are a year old; in a month if they appeared more than a year ago.

But for this, as for many other things, we must know how to put ourselves on guard against excess imagination; the too enthusiastic author of *The Key to the Great Work* sees marvels even in the spirituous dissolution of the stone: "Burning golden sparks", says the writer, "must come out of it and an infinity of colors must appear in the vase". It is going a little too far in the description of phenomena which no philosopher points out. Furthermore, he does not acknowledge any limits to the virtues of the Elixir: "Leprosy, gout, paralysis, kidney stone, epilepsy, dropsy could not resist the virtue of this medicine". And as the healing of these reputedly incurable diseases doesn't seem sufficient to him, he eagerly adds to the list even more admirable properties. "This medicine causes the deaf to hear, the blind to see, the mute to speak, the lame to walk; it can totally renew a man by causing his skin to change, his teeth, fingernails and white hair to fall out, in stead of which now ones will grow, in the color desired". We are now drifting into humor and buffoonery.

Going by what the majority of sages say, the stone can give excellent results in the plant kingdom, particularly in what concerns fruit trees. In the spring, if we pour a solution of the Elixir highly diluted with rain water on the soil close to their roots, they can be made resistant to all causes of decay and barrenness. They produce even more and bear healthy and delicious fruits. Batsdorff goes so far as to say that it could be possible, using this process, to cultivate exotic vegetables in our latitude. "Delicate plants", he writes, "which have difficulty growing in climates of an opposite temperament to that which is natural to them, by being watered with it, become as vigorous as if they were in their native soil proper and set by nature".

Among the other marvelous properties attributed to the philosophers' stone, some ancient authors quote many examples of the transformation of crystal into ruby and quartz into diamond by means of a kind of progressive soaking. They even consider the possibility of rendering glass ductile and malleable, a thing which, in spite of Cyliani's assertion ⁽⁵⁾, we will take care not to certify because the Elixir's proper mode of action --- contraction and hardening --- seem contrary to obtaining such an effect. Be that as it may, Christophe Merret quotes this opinion and speaks about it in the Preface to his treatise ⁽⁶⁾ in the following way: "As for the malleability of glass", he says, "upon which alchemists base the possibility of their Elixir, it seems to be corroborated, albeit not very firmly, by the following passage from Pliny, Book XXXVI, Ch. LXXVI: 'Moreover, it is said, that during the reign of Tiberius the Emperor, there was devised a certain temper of glass, which makes it pliable and flexible to wind and turn without breaking: but the artificer who devised this was put down, and his work house, for fear lest vessels made of such glass should take away the credit from the rich plate of brass, silver, and gold, and make them of no price: and verily this bruit hath run current a long time (but how true, it is not so certain)'.

"Other authors recounted the same fact after Pliny, but with somewhat different circumstances. Dio Cassius, Book LVII ⁽⁷⁾, says: 'About this time one of the largest porticos in Rome began to lean one side, and was set upright in a remarkable way by an architect whose name no one knows because Tiberius, jealous of his wonderful achievement, would not permit it to be entered into the records. This architect, then, whatever his name may have been, first strengthened the foundations round about, so that they should not collapse, and wrapped all the rest of the structure in fleeces and thick garments, binding it firmly together on all sides by means of rope; then with the aid of many men and windlasses he raised it back to its original position. At the time Tiberius both admired and envied him; for the former reason he honored him with a present of money, and for the latter he expelled him from the city. Later the exile approached him to crave pardon, and while doing so purposely let fall a crystal goblet; and though it was bruised in some way or shattered, yet by passing his hands over it he promptly exhibited it whole once more. For this he hoped to obtain pardon, but instead the emperor put him to death'. Isidore confirms the same thing; he only adds that the emperor, indignant, threw the glass on the pavement, but the workman, having taken out a hammer and having fixed it, was asked by Tiberius whether anyone else knew the secret, and after the workman assured him under oath that none other than himself knew it, the emperor had his head cut off for fear that if he divulged it, gold would fall into contempt and metals would lose their value".

When taking exaggeration and legendary additions into account, it remains true nevertheless that the hermetic fruit carries in itself the highest gift which God, through nature, can give to men of good will on earth.

Panel 3 --- The effigy of the Ouroboros serpent stands on the capital of an elegant column. This curious bas-relief is characterized by the axiom:

.NOSCE.TE.IPSUM.

The Latin translation of the Greek inscription which was represented on the fronton of the famous temple at Delphi:

Know thyself!

We have already encountered, in some ancient manuscripts, the same maxim thus paraphrased: "You who want to know the stone, know thyself well and you shall know it". Such is the statement of the law of analogy which gives in effect the key to the mystery. Now that which precisely characterizes our figure is that column responsible for the emblematic serpent's support is reversed in relation to the inscription's direction. An intentional, deliberate, and premeditated arrangement giving to the whole the appearance of a key as well as of the graphic sign with which the Ancients used to record their mercury. Key and pillar of the Work are moreover epithets applied to mercury, because it is the mercury that the elements assembled in appropriate proportions and natural quality; from it everything proceeds because it alone has the power to dissolve, mortify and destroy the bodies, to dissociate them, to separate their pure parts, and to join them with spirits and this to generate new metallic beings different from their parents. The authors are therefore right to assert that everything that the sages search for can be found in mercury per se, and this should indicate the alchemist to direct his efforts to the acquisition of this indispensable body.

However in order to succeed we advise him to act methodically and to study in a simple, and rational fashion, the manner in which nature operates in living beings in order to transform the absorbed food, rid it of useless substances through the digestion process, into black blood, and then into red blood, the generator of organic tissues and vital energy. *Nosce te ipsum*. The alchemist will thus recognize that the mineral producers of mercury, which are also the authors of its feeding, growth and life, must first be chosen with discernment and worked with care. For, although theoretically everything can be used for this composition, nevertheless some are too far removed from the active metallic nature to be truly useful to us, either because of their impurities or because their maturation was arrested or pushed beyond the required term. Rocks, stones, and metalloids belong to the first category; gold and silver enter the second one. The agent we need lacks vigor in the metalloids and its debility cannot help us in any way; in gold and silver, on the other hand, we would search in vain: nature has separated it from the perfect bodies during their appearance on the physical plane.

By expressing this truth, we do not mean to say that gold and silver should absolutely be proscribed, or claim that these metals are excluded from the Work by masters of the science. But we fraternally warn the disciple that neither gold nor silver, even modified, enter into the composition of mercury. And were we to discover, in some classical authors, a contrary assertion, we should never believe that the Adept, such as Philalethes, Basil Valentine, Nicolas Flamel, and Bernard Trevisan, actually meant philosophical gold or silver, and not the precious metals with which they neither have nor show anything in common.

Panel 4 --- Lying on the bottom of an upside down bushel, a candle burns. The epigraph of the rustic motif reads:

.SIC.LVCEAT.LUX.VESTRA.

May your light so shine.

For us, the flame points to the metallic spirit which is the purest, and clearest part of the body, its soul and light proper, although its essential part is the least in terms of quantity. We have often said that the quality of the spirit, being airy and volatile, always forces it to rise and that its nature is to shine as soon as it is separated from the coarse and corporal opacity which coats it. It is written that one does not light a candle to put it under a bushel but to place it in a candlestick so that it can light everything which surrounds it ⁽⁸⁾. In the same way we see in the Work the need to render manifest this inner fire, this light or this soul invisible under the hard crust of heavy matter, The operation used by the ancients philosophers to reach this goal, they called sublimation, although it has but a very remote connection with the ordinary sublimation of spagyrist. For the spirit, ready to disengage itself as soon as it has been given the means, cannot however totally abandon the body; but it creates for itself a garb closer to its nature, more adaptable to its will, from the clear and purified particles it can gather around itself so as to use it as its new vehicle. It then reaches the outer surface of the blended substance and continues to move upon the face of the waters, as it is said in Genesis 1:2, until there was light. From then on, through coagulation, it takes on a white shiny color, and its separation from the mass has become exceedingly easy, since the light of itself has moved on the bushel, leaving it to the artist to collect it.

Let us learn also, in order for the student to ignore nothing of the practice, that this separation, or sublimation of the body and manifestation of the spirit, must occur gradually and must be reiterated as many times as deemed expedient. Each of these reiterations takes the name of eagle, and Philalethes asserts that the fifth eagle resolves the moon, but seven to nine eagles need to be performed in order to attain the characteristic splendor of the sun. The Greek word [*327-1] (*aigle*), wherefrom the sages have drawn the term of eagle, means brilliance, sharp clarity, light, torch. To make the eagle fly, according to the hermetic expression, is to make the light shine by uncovering it from its dark envelope and bringing it to the surface. We should add that, contrary to chemical sublimation, the spirit being in small quantity compared to the body, our operation yields little of the vivifying and organizing principle which we need. So, according to the philosopher of Dampierre's advice, the prudent artist will strive to make the hidden manifest and to "make that which is below to be above", if he wishes to see the inner metallic light radiate outwardly.

Panel 5 --- A moving streamer reinforce here the symbolic meaning of a drawing which today has disappeared. If we believe the Epigraphy from the Saintonge Region, it represented "a hand holding a pike". All that is left today is the phylactery and its inscription reduced by the last two letters:

.NON.SON.RALES.NVS.AMOR[ES].

These are not our loves.

But this lone Spanish phrase of vague meaning does not authorize any serious commentary. Rather than spread an erroneous interpretation, we would prefer to remain silent about this incomplete motif.

Panel 6 --- The causes for impossibility invoke for the preceding bas-relief are equally valid for this one. A little quadruped, which the scaly state of the limestone does not allow us to identify, seems to be enclosed in a bird cage. This motif has suffered much. From its motto barely two words can be read:

LIBERTA.VER

Belonging to the sentence preserved by some authors:

.AMPANSA.LIBERTA.VERA.CAPI.INTVS.

This is where the abuse of freedom gets you.

The topic is in all likelihood the spirit, at first free, and then imprisoned inside the body as in a very strong cage. However it also seems obvious that the animal, in the usual attitude of a bird, brought through its name or its species a special, precise meaning easy to identify in the work process. As these elements, essential for an exact interpretation, are lacking, we are forced to move to the next panel.

Panel 7 --- Lying on the ground, an unhooked lantern whose little half-open door reveals its extinguished candle. The phylactery marking the subject contains a warning reserved for the use of the impatient and fickle artist:

.SIC.PERIT.INCONSTANS.

So perishes the inconstant one.

Like the lantern without a light, his faith ceases to shine; easily defeated, unable to react, he falls and in vain seeks in the surrounding darkness this light which can only be found within.

But while the inscription presents no ambiguity, the image, on the other hand, is much less clear. This stems from the fact that the interpretation can be given in two ways in consideration of the method employed, and also of the path followed. We first discover an allusion to the fire of the wheel, which, for fear of its ceasing resulting in the loss of the matters, should not for even one moment cease its activity. Already in the long way, a slowing down of its energy, a lowering of the temperature constitute accidents detrimental to the regular progress of the operation; for, even if nothing is lost, the length of time, already substantial, is increased even more. An excess of fire spoils everything; however, if the philosophical amalgam is merely reddened and not calcined, it is possible to regenerate it by redissolving it, according to the Cosmopolite's advice, and by resuming the coction with more caution. Completely extinguishing the fire on the other hand causes the irremediable ruin of the content, although if analyzed the latter does not seem to have undergone any change. Therefore, during the entire course of the work the hermetic axiom told by Lintaut must be remembered which teaches that "gold, once dissolved into spirit, if it feels the cold, is lost with the entire Work". Consequently, do not activate the flame inside your lantern too much and watch that you do not let it go out: you would be between Scylla and Charybdis ⁽⁹⁾.

Applied to the short way, the symbol of the lantern provides another explanation to one of the essential points of the Great Work. It is no longer the elemental fire, but the potential fire --- the secret flame of the matter itself --- which the authors veiled from the layman in the form of this familiar image, What then is this mysterious, natural, and unknown, fire which the artist must be capable of introducing into his subject? Here is a question that no philosopher has wished to resolve, even by resorting to the help of an allegory. Artephius and Pontanus speak of it in such an abstruse fashion that this important thing remains incomprehensible or goes unnoticed. Limojon de Saint Didier asserts that this fire is of the nature of limestone. Basil Valentine, ordinarily more verbose, is content to write: "Then light the lamp of wisdom and seek with it the gross thing that was lost". Trismosin is barely clearer: "Build", he says, "a fire in your glass or in the earth which holds it enclosed". Most of the other authors designate

this inner light, hidden within the darkness of substance, by the epithet of fire of the lamp. Batsdorff describes the philosophical lamp as one always needing to be abundantly supplied with oil and its flame as always needing to be fed by way of an asbestos wick. The Greek [*329-1] (*asbestos*) means inextinguishable, of unlimited duration, tireless, inexhaustible, qualities attributed to our secret fire, which says Basil Valentine, "whines in the darkness, although it does not burn". As for the lamp, we find it in the Greek term [*329-2] (*lamptern*), lantern, torch, which used to designate the fire vase where wood was burned to provide light. Such indeed is our vase, dispensing the fire of the sages, that is, our matter and its spirit, or, to say it all, the hermetic lantern. Finally, a term close to [*330-1] (*lampas*), lamp, the word [*330-2] (*lampe*), expresses all that which rises and comes to the surface, scum, foam, scoria, etc. And this indicates, for whomever possesses a smattering of hermetic knowledge, the nature of the body, or, if you prefer, of the mineral casing containing this fire of the lamp which only needs to be stirred up by ordinary fire to perform the most surprising of metamorphoses.

Yet another word for the benefit of our brothers. Hermes, in his Emerald Table, utters these solemn, true, and important words: "You separate the earth from the fire, the subtle from the gross, gently, with great industry. It rises from the earth to the sky, gently, with great industry, and then descends from the sky into the earth and thus receives the virtue of higher and lower things". Note therefore that the philosopher recommends to separate, to divide, and not to destroy or sacrifice one to save the other. For if it were so, we ask you, from which body would the spirit rise and into which earth would the fire descend to again?

Pontanus affirms that all superfluities of the stone are converted under the action of fire into a unique essence and that as a consequence whoever claims to separate anything however small understands nothing about our philosophy.

Panel 8 --- Two vases, one in the form of an embossed and engraved flagon, the other a common earthen pot, are represented in the same frame occupied by this saying of St Paul:

.ALIVD.VAS.IN.HONOREM.ALIVD.IN.CONTVMELIAM.

One vessel for honorable uses, another for base uses.

"But in a great house", says the Apostle ⁽¹⁰⁾, "there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor".

Our two vases appear well defined, clearly marked and in absolute agreement with the precepts of hermetic theory. One is the vase of nature made of the same red clay God used to form the body of Adam with. The other is the case of the art, whose entire material is composed of pure, clear, red, incombustible, fixed, and diaphanous gold, of an incomparable brightness. And these are our two vessels which truly represent only two distinct bodies containing the metallic spirits, the only agents we need.

If the reader is acquainted with the traditional manner of writing of the philosophers --- which manner we try to imitate correctly so that the Ancients can be explained through us and so we can be controlled by them, it will be easier for him to understand what the hermeticists meant by vessels. For these vessels represent not only two matters, or rather one matter in two states of its evolution, but they also symbolize our two ways based on the use of these different bodies.

The first of these ways which uses the vase of the art is time-consuming, painstaking, thankless, accessible to wealthy people, but is in a place of great honor in spite of the expenditures it entails, because it is the one which authors preferably describe. It is used as a support for their reasoning as well as for the theoretical development of the Work, requires an uninterrupted labor of twelve to eighteen months, and starts with natural gold prepared and dissolved in the philosophical mercury which is then cooked in a glass matrass. This is the honorable vase reserved for noble use of these precious substances which are the exalted gold and mercury of the sages.

The second way demands, from beginning to end, only the help of a coarse clay abundantly available, of such a low cost that in our time ten francs are sufficient to acquire a quantity more than enough for our needs. It is the clay and the way of the poor, of the simple and the modest, of those whom nature fills with wonder even by her most humble manifestations. Extremely easy, it only requires the presence of the artist, for the mysterious labor perfects itself by itself and is achieved in seven to nine days at the most. This way, unknown to the majority of practicing alchemists, is elaborated from start to finish in one crucible made of fireproof clay. It is the way that the great masters called woman's work and child's play; it is to it that they apply the old hermetic axiom: *una res, una via, una dispositio*. One matter, one vessel, one furnace. Such is our earthen vase, a despised, plain vase of common use, "which everyone has before his eyes, which costs nothing, which can be found at everyone's house, yet which none can recognize without a revelation".

Panel 9 --- Cut through its middle, a snake, in spite of the fatal nature of its wound, yet believes itself able to survive for a long time in this state:

.DVM.SPIRO.SPERABO.

He is made to say:

As long as I breathe, I hope.

The serpent-like image of mercury, by its two sections, represents the two parts of the dissolved metal which will become fixed later, one by the other, and whose joining will give it its new nature, its physical individuality, its efficiency.

For the sulphur and mercury of metals, when extracted and isolated under the disintegrating energy of our first agent, or secret solvent, on their own by simple contact are reduced to the form of a viscous oil --- a fatty and coagulable smoothness which the ancients called metallic humid radical and mercury of the sages. It is evident from this that it can logically be considered as representing a liquefied and reincrusted metal, i.e., artificially put back into a state close to its original form. But as these elements are merely associated and not radically united, it seems reasonable that our symbolist thought of representing mercury in the shape of a sectioned reptile whose two parts each keep their activity and their reciprocal virtues. And this is what justifies the statement the statement of faith affixed on the stone emblem: *As long as I breathe, I hope*. In this state of simple mixture, the philosophical mercury keeps the balance, the stability, and the energy of its constituents, although the latter are yet destined to mortification, and decomposition which prepare and achieve their mutual and perfect interpenetration. As long as the mercury has not felt the grip of the igneous mediator, it can be indefinitely preserved provided it is carefully kept away from the combined action of air and light. This is what certain authors give us to understand when they assert that "philosophical mercury always keeps its excellent qualities if it is kept in a tightly sealed bottle", and it is

known that in alchemical language every container is said to be closed, stoppered or luted, when it is kept in complete darkness

(1) De Cyrano Bergerac, *The Comical History of the States and Empires of the World of the Sun*; translated by A. Lovell, Henry Rhodes, London, 1687, p. 81.

(2) Batsdorff: *Le Filet d'Ariadne, pour entrer avec seurete dans le Labirinthe de la Philosophie Hermetique*; Paris, L. d'Houry, 1695, p. 136.

(3) *Le Clef du Grande-Oeuvre, ou Lettre du Sancelrien Tourangeua (The Key to the Great Work or Letters from the inhabitant o the Sancerre and Tours Region)*; Paris, Cilleau, 1777, p. 54.

(4) Huginus a Barma: *Le Regne de Saturne change en Siecle d'Or (Saturn's Reign turned into a Golden Centrury)*; Paris, P. Derieu, 1780, p. 190.

(5) "I shall not describe here the very strange operations I performed, to my great surprise, in the vegetable and animal kingdoms, as well as the means to render glass malleable, and making pearls and precious stones more beautiful than those of nature --- not wanting to be a perjurer nor to seem to exceed the limits of human understanding"; Cyliani: *Hermes Devoile (Hermes Unveiled)*

(6) Neri, Merret and Kunckel: *L'Arte de la Verrerie (The Art of Glassmaking)*; Paris, Durnad et Pisot, 1752.

(7) Dio Cassius: *Dio's Roman History*, translated by E. Carey, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1924, Book LVII, vol, 7, pp. 173-4.

(8) Matt. 5:15; Mark 4:21; Luke 8:16.

(9) Translator's note: In other words, you would fall out of the frying pan into the fire. The expression was left as is because if the reference to the Roman locations, and mythological monsters.

(10) II Timothy 2:20.

THE CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE VI

Third Series (Plate XXVIII).

Panel 1 --- Raised on its stand and half plunging into the bucket, a grindstone awaits only the knife grinder to be put into motion. However, the subject's epigraph which should emphasize its meaning, conversely seems not to bear any connection with it; we can't help being surprised to read this curious inscription:

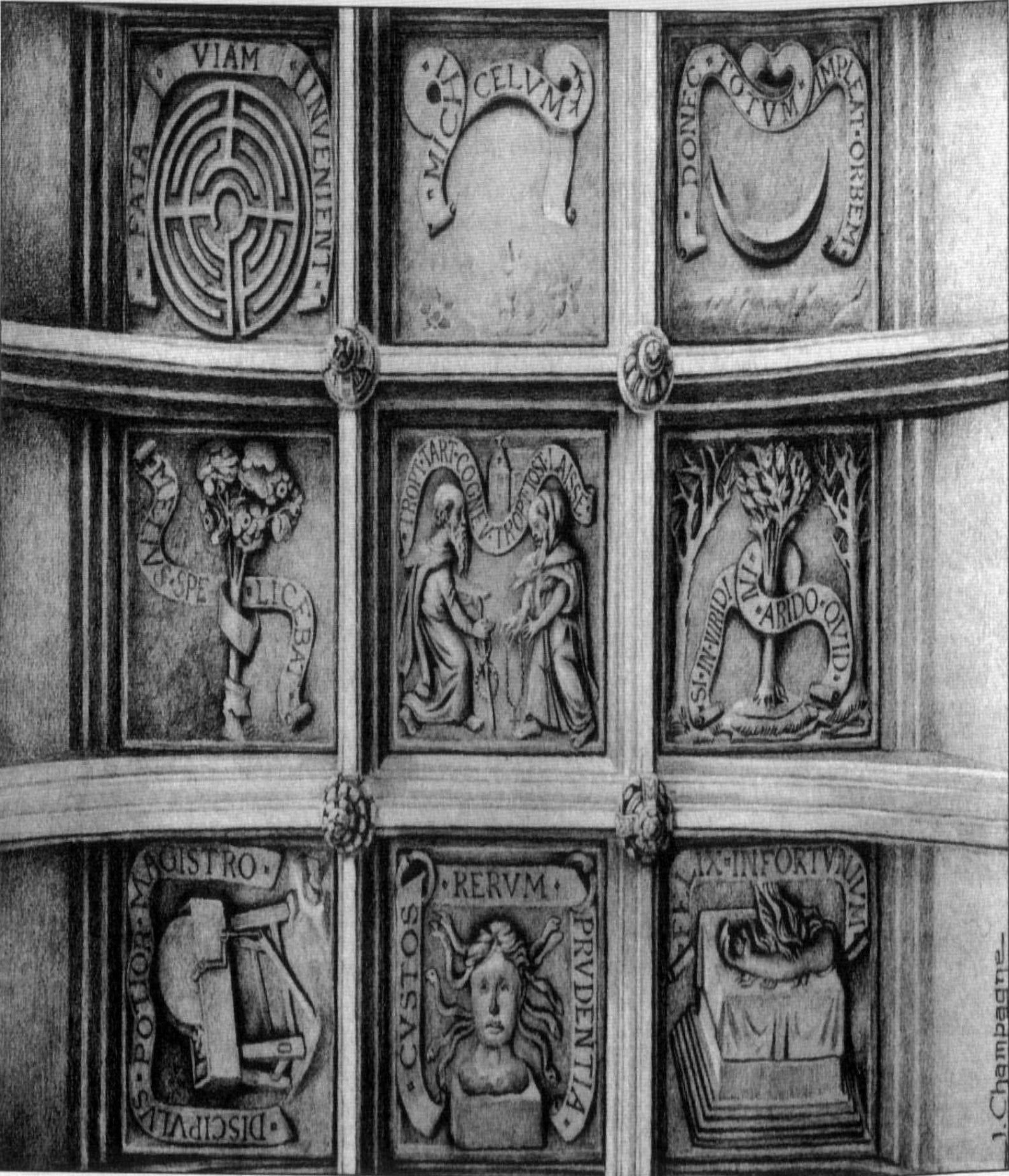
.DISCIPVLVS.POTIOR.MAGISTRO.

Is the student superior to the master?

We will readily agree that there is no need of an exhaustive apprenticeship to have a grindstone turn, and we have never heard that the most skilled of low-wagers with his rudimentary machine had earned the right to fame, As useful and honorable as it is, the occupation of knife grinder does not lay claim to the contribution of an innate talent, special knowledge, a rare technique, or any master's certificate. It is therefore certain that the inscription and the image have another sense, clearly esoteric, whose interpretation we intend to provide ⁽¹⁾.

Envisioned in its different uses, the grinding stone is one of the philosophical emblems meant to express the hermetic solvent, or the first mercury without which it is completely useless to undertake anything nor hope for anything profitable. It is our only matter capable of setting into motion, animating, and revivifying common metals, because the latter easily dissolve in it, divide themselves there, and adapt themselves under the influence of a mysterious affinity. Although this primitive subject possesses neither the quality nor the power of philosophical mercury, it nevertheless possesses everything it needs to become so, and indeed becomes so, provided the metallic seed, which it lacks, is added to it. Thus art comes to help nature, by allowing this skillful and marvelous worker to perfect that which, for lack of means, materials or favorable conditions, she had to leave unfinished. This initial mercury, the subject of the art and our true solvent, is precisely the substance which the philosophers named the unique matrix, the mother of the Work; without her, it would be impossible for us to achieve the preliminary decomposition of metals nor, consequently, to obtain the humid radical or mercury of the sages, which truly is the stone of the philosophers. In such a way that whoever claims to make the mercury or the stone with all the metals as well as whoever asserts the unity of the first matter and mentions it as the only thing necessary is indeed speaking truthfully.

It is not by chance that the hermeticists chose the grinding stone ⁽²⁾ as the hieroglyphic sign of the subject and our Adept certainly obeyed the same traditions by providing a place for it in the panels of Dampierre. We know that grinding stones have a circular form and that the circle is the conventional signature of our solvent and so of all the bodies susceptible to evolve by fiery rotation. We again find mercury represented in this fashion on three pates of *The Art of the Potter* ⁽³⁾, that is to say, in the shape of a millstone, sometimes moved by a mule --- cabalistic image of the Greek word [*336-1] (*mule*), grinding stone --- sometimes by a slave or a person of rank dressed like a prince. These engravings translate the twofold power of the natural solvent which acts on metals like the grinding stone on grains or the sharpening stone on steel: it divides them, crushes them, sharpens them. So much so that, after having



CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE-SUR-BOUTONNE
 Panels of the Upper Gallery - Third Series

PLATE XXVIII

J. Champagn...

dissociated and partially digested them, the natural solvent becomes acidified, takes on a caustic quality and becomes more penetrating than it was before.

Medieval alchemists used the verb *acuer* (to sharpen) to express the operation that gives the solvent its cutting properties. Now *acuer* comes from the Latin *acuo*, to sharpen, to whet, to make cutting and penetrating, which corresponds not only to the new nature of the subject, but equally agrees with the role of the sharpening stone.

Of this work, who is the master? Obviously the one who sharpens and moves the grinding stone around --- this knife grinder missing from the bas-relief --- that is to say, the active sulphur of the dissolved metal. As for the disciple, he represents the first mercury, with a cold and passive quality, which some call faithful and loyal servant and others, die to its volatility, *servus fugitivus*, the fugitive slave. We could therefore answer the philosopher's question by saying that, given the very difference in their conditions, the student will never rise above the master; but on the other hand it can also be asserted that with time, the disciple in turn becomes master, will become his tutor's alter ego. For while the master lowers himself down to the level of his inferior in the dissolution, he will raise it along with him in the coagulation, and the fixation will make them similar tone another, equal in virtue, in valor, and power.

Panel 2 --- The head of Medusa, placed on a pedestal, shows its stern rictus and its hair intertwined with serpents; it is ornamented with the Latin inscription:

.CVSTOS.RERUM.PRVDENTIA.

Prudence is the guardian of things.

But the word *prudential* has a more extended meaning than *prudence* or *foresight*; it further denotes science, wisdom, experience, knowledge. In this bas-relief, epigram and figure are in accord to represent the secret science concealed under the multiple and varied hieroglyphs of the panels of Dampierre.

Indeed, the root of the Greek name [*337-1] (*Medusa*) is [*337-2] (*medos*) and expresses the thought which concerns us, our favorite study; *medos* further formed [*337-3] (*medusone*) whose meaning evokes *prudence* and *wisdom*. On the other hand, mythologists teach us that *Medusa* is known to the Greeks under the name of [*337-4] (*Gorgon*), which also served to qualify *Minerva* or *Pallas*, the goddess of *Wisdom*. We would perhaps discover in this connection the secret reason for the *aegis* --- the shield of *Minerva*, covered with the skin of *Almathea*, that was the she-goat, wet nurse of *Jupiter*, and decorated with the mask of the serpent-headed *Medusa* ⁽⁴⁾. Apart from the connection which can be established between the goat and the ram --- the latter bearer of the golden fleece and the former provided with the *cornucopia* --- we know that *Athena's* attribute had the power to petrify. It is said that *Medusa* changed into stone those whose eyes met hers. Finally, the very names of *Medusa's* sisters, *Euryale* and *Stheno*, also contribute their part to the revelation. *Euryale*, in Greek [*338-1] (*Euralos*), means that of which the area is large, vast, spacious; *Stheno* comes from [*338-2] (*Sthenos*), force, power, energy. And so the three *Gorgons* symbolically express the idea of power and scope proper to the natural philosophy.

These converging connection which we are forbidden to exhibit more clearly, allow us to conclude, apart from the fact, esoterically precise but which we have barely touched upon, that our motif has the purpose of pointing to wisdom as the source and guardian of all our

knowledge, the infallible guide of the laborer to whom she will reveal the secrets hidden in nature.

Panel 3 --- Lying on the altar of sacrifice, a forearm is consumed by fire. The sign of this fiery emblem holds in two words:

.FELIX.INFORTVNIVM.

Happy unhappiness!

Although the topic seems a priori quite obscure and without equivalent in the hermetic literature and iconography, yet it yields to analysis and perfectly agrees with the Great Works' technique.

The human forearm, which the Greeks simply called the arm [*338-1] (*brachion*), is the hieroglyph for the short, abridged way (*ars brevis*). As a matter of fact, our Adept, toying with words as the learned cabalist he is, hides under the substantive brachion, arm, a comparative of [*338-2] (*brachus*), written and pronounced in the same fashion. The latter means short, brief, of short duration, and forms several compounds, including [*338-3] (*brachutes*), brevity. Thus the comparative brachion, meaning brief, the homonym of brachion, arm, takes on the specific meaning of brief technique, *ars brevis*.

But the Greeks used yet another expression to qualify the arm. When they evoked the hand, [*338-4] (*cheir*), they applied by extension the idea to the entire upper limb and gave it the figurative value of a skilled artistic production of a special process, of a personal style of work, in short, a tour de main, a flick of the wrist, whether acquired or revealed. All these acceptations of the word exactly characterize the fine points of the Great Work in its swift, simple and direct realization, for it only requires the application of a very energetic fire to which the flick of the wrist boils down. Now this fire on our bas-relief is represented not only by the flames, it is also represented by the limb itself which the hand indicates as being the right arm; and it is well known from the proverbial expression that "to be the right arm" always applies to the agent responsible for the executing of the will of a superior --- the fire in the present case.

Apart from these reasons --- which are necessarily abstract because they are veiled in the form of a stone with a concise image --- there is another one, practical, which comes to uphold and conform in the practical domain the esoteric affiliation of the first ones. We shall state it by saying that whosoever being ignorant of the flick of the wrist of the operation yet takes the risk to undertake it, must fear everything from the fire; that person is in real danger and can hardly escape the consequences of a thoughtless and reckless action. Why then, one could say to us, not to provide this means? We will answer this by saying that to reveal an experiment of this sort would be to give the secret of the short way and that we have not received from God nor from our brothers the authorization to uncover such a mystery. It is already much that, prompted by our solicitude and charity, we warned the beginner whose lucky star leads to the threshold of the cave, that he should be on his guard and redouble his prudence. A similar warning is rarely encountered in the books, and quite succinct as to what concerns the *Ars Brevis*, but which the Adept of Dampierre knew as perfectly as Ripley, Basil Valentine, Philalethes, Albertus Magnus, Huginus a Barma, Cyliani, or Naxagoras.

Nevertheless, and because we deem it useful to warn the neophyte, it would be wrong to conclude that we are trying to dishearten him. If he wants to risk the adventure, let it be for

him the trial by fire to which the future initiates of Thebes and Hermopolis had to be put through before receiving the sublime teachings. Isn't the inflamed arm on the altar the expressive symbol of the sacrifice, of the renunciation the science demands? Everything is paid for down here, not with gold, but with work, with suffering, often by leaving a part of oneself; and one could not pay too much for the possession of the least secret, of the tiniest truth. Therefore should the candidate feel endowed with faith and armed with the necessary courage, we fraternally wish him to come forth safe and sound from this difficult experience, which most often ends with the explosion of the crucible and the projection of the furnace. And then he could cry out, like our philosopher: Happy unhappiness! For the accident, forcing him to ponder the mistake he committed, will undoubtedly lead him to discover the means to avoid it and the flick of the wrist for the proper operation.

Panel 4 --- Affixed on a tree trunk covered with leaves and laden with fruits, an unfolded streamer bears the inscription:

.MELIVS.SPE.LICEBAT.

Indeed, one could have hoped for better.

This is an image of the solar tree which the Cosmopolite mentions in his allegory of the green forest, which he tells us belongs to the nymph Venus. About this metallic tree, the author, recounting the way the old man Saturn works in the presence of the lost puffer, says that he took some fruit from the solar tree, put it into ten parts of a certain water --- very rare and very hard to find --- and easily performed its dissolution.

Our Adept means here to speak of the first sulphur, which is the gold of the sages, the green, unripe fruit of the tree of knowledge. While the Latin phrase betrays some disappointment relative to a normal result, which many artists would very much like to obtain, it is because by means of this sulfur the transmutation can no longer be hoped for. Indeed, the philosophical gold is not the stone, and Philalethes carefully warns the student that it is only its first matter. And since this sulfur principle, according to the same author, requires an uninterrupted work of approximately 150 days, it is logical and particularly humane to think that such an apparently mediocre result could not satisfy the artist who anticipated reaching the Elixir in one bound, as it can happen in the short way.

Arrived at this point, the apprentice must recognize the impossibility of continuing the work, by pursuing the operation which gave him the first sulfur. If he wants to go on further he must retrace his steps, undertake a second cycle of new trials, work for a year, sometimes longer, before he reaches the stone of the first order. But if discouragement does not overtake him, let him follow the example of Saturn and redissolve in the mercury, according to the indicated proportions, this green fruit which divine goodness has allowed him to pluck. And he will then with his own eyes, see all the appearances of a progressive and perfect maturation follow each other. We could not remind him too much, however, that he is committed to a long, difficult path covered with thorns and dug with potholes; that as the art plays a larger part than nature, the opportunities for mistakes --- and the schools --- are more numerous. Let him preferably concentrate his attention on the mercury, which the philosophers sometimes called double, not without cause, sometimes ardent or sharp and actuated with its own salt. He must know before he accomplishes the dissolution of the sulphur that his first water --- the one that gave him the philosophical gold --- is too simple and too weak to serve as nourishment for the solar sea. And in order to overcome the difficulty, let him try to understand the allegory of the Massacre of the Innocents by Nicolas Flamel, as well as the

explanation which Limojon ⁽⁵⁾ gives of it as clearly as a master of the art can do it. As soon as he'll know, in terms of metals, what are these spirits of the bodies designated by the blood of the slaughtered innocents, and the manner in which the alchemist operates the differentiation of the two mercuries, he will have passed the obstacle and nothing, later on, except his impatience could frustrate him from the anticipated result.

Panel 5 --- Two pilgrims, each carrying a rosary, meet in the vicinity of a building --- a church or chapel --- which can be noticed in the background. Of these two men, quite old, bald, wearing a long beard and the same kind of clothes, one helps himself walking with a staff, the other, whose skull is protected by a thick hood, seems to show a sharp surprise at the adventure, and cries out:

.TROPT.TART.COGNEV.TROPT.TOST.LAISSE.

Known too late, abandoned too early.

Words of a disappointed puffer, happy to finally recognize at the end of his long road the so ardently desired humid radical, yet grieved to have lost in vain the physical vigor indispensable for the realization of the Work with this better companion. For it is indeed our faithful servant, mercury, which is here represented under the appearance of the first old man. A slight detail catches the acute student's attention; the rosary he holds forms, with his pilgrim's staff, the image of the caduceus, Hermes, symbolic attribute. On the other hand, we have often said that the dissolving matter is commonly acknowledged, among all philosophers, as the old man, the pilgrim, the traveler of the great Art, as taught by Michael Maier, Stolcius and numerous other masters.

As for the old alchemist, so happy about this meeting, while he knew not up to now where to find the mercury, now shows rather well how familiar this matter is to him, since his own rosary, a very eloquent hieroglyph, represents the circle surmounted by the cross, a symbol of the terrestrial globe and the signature of our little world. We then understand why the unfortunate artist regrets such a belated knowledge as well as his ignorance of so common a substance that he had within reach without ever having thought that it could procure him the mysterious water he vainly sought elsewhere.

Panel 6 --- In this bas-relief three trees of equal height are represented next to each other. Two of them show their dried up trunks and branches while the last, which remained healthy and vigorous, seems to be both the cause and the result of the others' death. This motif is ornamented with the motto:

.SI.IN.VIRIDE.IN.ARIDO.QUID.

If such is the case in green things, what would it be in dry things?

Our philosopher thus poses the principle of the analogical method, the unique means, the only resource the hermeticist has at his disposal for the resolution of natural secrets. So it could be answered, according to this principle, that that which occurs in the vegetable kingdom must find its equivalent in the mineral kingdom. As a consequence, if the dry and dead leaves yield their part of nourishment and vitality to the survivor planted next to them, it is logical to consider the latter as being their heir, the one to whom, in dying, they gave the complete enjoyment of the means from which they drew their sustenance. Seen from this angle and point of view, it appears to us as their son or descendant. The three trees also constitute a clear

symbol of the way in which the stone of the philosophers, the first being or subject of the Philosophers' Stone, is born.

The author of *Le Triomphe Hermetique* ⁽⁶⁾, rectifying the erroneous assertion of his predecessor, Pierre-Jean Fabre, asserts without ambiguity that "our stone is born from the destruction of two bodies". We will specify that, of these bodies, one is metallic, the other mineral, and that they both grew in the same earth. The tyrannical opposition of their opposite temperaments prevents them from ever coming t terms with each other except when the artist's will forces them to, by submitting these absolute antagonists to the violent action of fire. After a long and arduous battle they die exhausted. From their decomposition a third body is engendered, the heir of the vital energies and compounded qualities of its deceased parents.

Such is the origin of our stone, equipped ever since its birth with a dual metallic predisposition, which is dry and igneous, and with the dual mineral virtue, whose essence is to be cold and humid. Thus can the stone realize in its state of perfect equilibrium the union of the four natural elements encountered at the basis of all experimental philosophy. The heat of the fire is tempered by the coldness of the air, and the dryness of the earth is neutralized by the humidity of the water.

Panel 7 --- The geometric figure which we encounter here frequently ornamented the frontispieces of medieval alchemical manuscripts. It was commonly called Solomon's Labyrinth, and we mentioned elsewhere that it was reproduced on the stone floors of our great Gothic cathedrals. This figure bears as a motto:

.FATA.VIAM.INVENIENT.

The fates will well find their way.

Our bas-relief, specifically characterizing the long way, reveals the formal intention, expressed by the plurality of Dampierre's motifs, to primarily teach the other drawings of the same subject usually show three, which entrances, by the way, correspond to the three porches of the gothic cathedrals placed under the invocation of the Virgin mother. One entrance, absolutely straight, leads directly to the median chamber --- where Theseus slayed the Minotaur --- without encountering the least obstacle; it conveys the short, simple, easy way of the Work of the Poor. The second, which likewise leads to the center, only opens onto it after a series of detours, twists and turns, and convolutions; it is the hieroglyph for the long way and we have said that it refers to the preferred esotericism of our Adept. Finally, a third gallery of which the opening is parallel to that of the preceding ones, ends abruptly as a dead end a short distance from the threshold, and leads nowhere. It causes the despair and ruin of those who have gone astray, of the presumptuous ones, and of those who, without serious study and solid principles, nevertheless set out on the way and chanced the adventure.

Whatever their shape, whatever the complexity of their layout, the labyrinths are eloquent symbols of the Great Work, considered with regard to its material realization. Therefore we understand them as being in charge of expressing the two great difficulties which the Work contains: (1) having access to the inner chamber; (2) having the possibility of getting out of it. Of these two points, the first concerns the knowledge of matter --- which ensures entry --- and that of its preparation --- which the artist accomplishes in the center of the maze. The second concerns the mutation of the prepared matter with the aid of the fire. The alchemist thus retraces, in the opposite direction, though with prudence, slowness and perseverance, the

course he quickly followed at the beginning of his labor. So as not to get lost, the philosophers advise him to mark his path from his starting point --- for the operations, which we could call analytical --- with the help of this Thread of Ariadne, without which he would be at great risk as he would not be able to make it back --- that is to say, he would become lost in the work of synthetic unification. It is to the second stage or period of the Work which the maze's Latin inscription applies. As a matter of fact, from the moment when the compost, formed of the vitalized bodies, begins its evolution, the most impenetrable mystery covers with its veil the order, the measure, the rhythm, the harmony and the progress of this admirable metamorphosis, that man has the ability neither to comprehend nor to explain. Resigned to its own fate, submitted to the torture of the fire in the darkness of its narrow prison, the regenerated mater follows the secret path mapped out by destiny.

Panel 8 --- Erased drawing, sculpture of which the relief is vanishing. Only the inscription remains and the clarity of its engraving contrasts with the bare uniformity of the surrounding limestone; there one can read:

.MICH.CELVM.

The sky is mine!

Exclamation of passionate enthusiasm, exuberant joy, proud cry, one would say, of an Adept in possession of the Magistry. Perhaps. But is it really what the author's thought wanted to convey? Allow us to doubt it, for, founding our opinion on so many serious and positive motifs, of epigraphs with level-headed meanings, we prefer to see here the expression of a radiant hope directed towards the knowledge of celestial things rather than the presumptuous and odd idea of an illusory conquest of the empyrean.

It is obvious that the philosopher, having reached the tangible result of the hermetic labor, no longer ignored the power, the preponderance of the spirit, or the truly prodigious influence it exercises over inert substance. Strength, will, even knowledge belong to the spirit; life is the consequence of its activity; movement, evolution, and progress are its results. And as everything partakes of its nature, as everything is generated and is unveiled by it, it is reasonable to believe that in the final analysis everything must necessarily return to it. It then suffices to observe its manifestations in heavy matter, to study the laws it seems to abide by, to know its guidelines, in order to acquire some notions about the primary things and laws of the universe. So can we keep hoping to obtain, by the simple examination of spiritual labor in the hermetic work, the elements of a less vague conception of the divine Great Work, of the Creator, and of created things. That which is below is like that which is above, Hermes said; it is by the persevering study of all that is accessible to us that we can raise our intelligence up to the comprehension of the inaccessible. There is the newly-born idea, in the philosophers' ideal, of the fusion of human and divine spirit, of the return of the creature to the Creator, of the unique, pure, and ardent fire, from which the industrious, immortal, martyred spark must, by order of God, have escaped in order to be joined to vile matter until the completed accomplishment of its earthly periplus.

Panel 9 --- Our predecessors only recognized in this little subject the symbol attributed to the King of France, Henry II. It is made of a simple lunar crescent, accompanied by this motto:

.DONEC.TOTVM.IMPLEAT.ORBEM.

Until it fills the entire earth.

We do not believe that the interpretation of this emblem, to which Diane de Poitiers remains a total stranger, can lend itself to the last ambiguity. The newest of the "sons of science" does not ignore that the moon, the spagyric hieroglyph for silver, marks the final goal of the white stage of the Work and the transition period of the red stage of the Work. It is during the reign of the moon that the characteristic color of silver, that is to say white, appears. Artepheus, Nicholas Flamel, Philelethes, and numerous other masters teach that, at this early stage of the coction, the rebis offers the appearance of a thin and silky threads, of hair spreading on the surface and progressing from the periphery towards the center, Hence the name capillary whiteness, which is used to designate this coloration. The moon, say the texts, is then in its first quarter. Under the influence of fire, the whiteness gains in depth, overtakes the entire mass and turns lemon-yellow on its surface. It is the full moon; the crescent has enlarged to form the perfect lunar disk: it has completely filled the orb. The matter is provided with a certain degree of fixity and dryness, sure signs of the completion of the little Magistry. If the artist wishes to go no further or if he cannot pursue the Work all the way to the red stage, all he needs to do is to continue to multiply the stone by repeating the same operation in order to raise its power and virtue. And these reiterations can be repeated as many times as the matter permits, that is, until it becomes saturated with its spirit and until this spirit "fills the entire earth". Past the saturation point, its properties change; too subtle, it can no longer be coagulated; it remains then as a thick oil, luminous in darkness, henceforth without any action on living beings as on metallic bodies. What is true of the white stage of the Work is also true of the great Magistry. In the latter, it suffices to increase the temperature as soon as the lemon-yellow whiteness is obtained, without touching or opening the vessel however, and provided that, in the beginning, the red ferment was substituted for the white sulfur. This, at least, is what Philalethes recommends and that Flamel does not, although their apparent disagreement is easily explained if one masters the guidelines concerning the paths and operations. Be that as it may, by pursuing the action of the fourth degree of fire, the compost dissolves by itself, new colors follow one another until a weak red, called peachtree flower, becoming gradually more intense as the dryness spreads, announces the success and perfection of the work. Cooled, the matter shows a crystalline texture made, it seems, of small agglomerated rubies, rarely free, always of heavy density and bright luster, frequently coated with an amorphous, opaque, and reddish mass called by the ancients the cursed earth of the stone. This residue, easy to separate, is of no use and must be discarded.

(1) We'll never blame enough those who, hidden and almighty, decided at Paris the unexplainable destruction of the very ancient street named Nonnains d'Hyerès, which was in no way breaching public health regulations and presented the remarkable harmony of its 18th century facades. This vandalism, committed at a large scale, resulting in the loss of the curious sign that used to ornament the building located at the civic number 5, approximately at the height of the second floor, at the corner of the narrow rue Hotel-de-Ville. Emerging out of the stone, as a round boss, the motif of large size, which preserved its original colors, showed a knife grinder in the dress of the time: black three-corned hat, red redingote, white stocking. The man applied himself to sharpening iron, in front of his sturdy wheelbarrow, putting the two major elements into motion, the hidden fire of his grindstone and the rare water that appears to be distributed by a large clog as a thin trickle.

(2) Translator's note: "Meule", the word used in the French text means both the grinding stone and the millstone.

(3) Cyprian Piccolpassi: *Les Trois Livres de l'Art du Potier*; transl. By Master Claudius Popelyn; Paris, Libr. Internationale, 1861.

(4) Translator's Note: The author uses the term Medua Ophiotrix.

(5) Limojon De Saint Didier: *Lettre aux vrais Disciples d'Hermès*, in *Le Triomphe Hermetique*; Amsterdam, H. Wetstein, 1699.

(6) Ibid., p. A4.

THE CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE VII

Fourth Series (Plate XXIX)

Panel 1 --- This bas-relief shows us a rock that a raging sea is attacking, and threatens to swallow up; but two cherubs blow on the waves and still the tempest. The phylactery accompanying this figure exalts "*Constancy in Peril*":

.IN.PERICVLIS.CONSTNTIA.

A philosophical virtue which the artist must know to keep during the course of the coction, and especially at its beginning, when the unleashed elements collide with one another and violently push back each other, Later, in spite of the length it this thankless stage, the yoke is less painful to bear, for the effervescence quiets down and peace finally emerges as a result from the triumph of the spiritual elements --- air and fire --- symbolized by the little angels, the agents of our mysterious elemental conversion. But about this conversion, perhaps it is not superfluous to give here some precise details about the manner in which the phenomenon is accomplished, about which subject, in our opinion, the Ancients remained excessively non-committal.

Every alchemist knows that the stone is formed of the four elements united by a perfect cohesion, in a state of natural and perfect equilibrium. What is less known is the manner in which these four elements are resolved into three physical principles which the artist prepares and assembles according to the rules of the art, taking into account the required conditions. And these primary elements, represented in our panel by the sea (water, the rock (earth), the sky (air), and the cherubs (light, spirit, fire), are reduced into salt, sulphur, and mercury, the material and tangible principles of our stone. Of these principles, two are reputed to be simple, sulfur and mercury, because they are found naturally combined in the body of metals; only one, the salt, appears to be constituted partly of a fixed substance, partly of a volatile matter. We know, from chemistry, that salts, formed from an acid and a base, reveal through decomposition the volatility of the one and the fixity of the other. As salt partakes both of the mercurial principles by its cold and volatile humidity (air), and of the sulphurous principle by its fiery and fixed dryness (fire), it therefore serves as a mediator between the sulphur and mercury components of our embryo. Thanks to its double quality, the salt enables the realization of the conjunction, which would otherwise be impossible without it, between one and the other antagonists, the actual parents of the hermetic little king. Thus, the four primary elements are assembled two by two in the stone during its formation because the salt possesses in itself the fire and air needed for the combination of the sulfur-earth and the mercury-water.

Yet, even though saline compounds are close to sulfurous and mercurial natures (because fire always seeks terrestrial food and air mixes readily with water) they do not have such an affinity for the material and ponderable principles of the Work, the sulfur and the mercury, that their presence alone, their catalysis, would be capable of preventing any discord in this philosophical marriage. On the contrary, it is only after long disputes and numerous shocks that air and fire, breaking their saline association, act together to restore concord between enemies that a simple difference of evolution had separated.



CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE-SUR-BOUTONNE
Panels of the Upper Gallery - Fourth Series

PLATE XXIX

Henceforth we must conclude, in the theoretical explanation of the conversion of elements and their indissoluble ⁽¹⁾ union at the stage of the Elixir, that the salt is the unique instrument of a durable harmony, the instigator of a stable peace prolific in fortunate results. And this peaceful mediator, not content to ceaselessly intervene during the slow, tumultuous and chaotic elaboration of our mixtion, still contributes his own substance to nourish and fortify the newly formed body. The image of the Good Shepherd who gives his life for his sheep, the philosophical salt, is role finished, dies so that our young monarch can live, grow, and extend his supreme will over the entire metallic nature.

Panel 2 --- Humidity had eaten away the back slab, and deprived it of the relief it once possessed. The imprecise and rough rugosity which still exists could belong to some plants. The inscription has suffered much; only certain letters have resisted the ravages of time:

..M.RI...V.RV..

With so few elements, it is impossible to reconstruct the phrase; however, according to the work entitled *Landscapes and Monuments of Poitou*, which we have already cited, the pants would be ears of wheat and the inscription should read:

.MIHI.MORILLVCRVM.

Death is a gain for me.

It is an allusion to the necessity of our mineral seed's mortification and decomposition. For, just as the grain of wheat could not germinate, produce, and multiply if putrefaction had not previously liquefied it into the earth. Similarly it is indispensable to provoke the disaggregation of the philosophical rebis where the seed is included, in order to generate a new being of a similar nature. Yet capable of augmenting itself in weight and volume, as well as in power and virtue. In the center of the compound, the imprisoned, living, immortal spirit, always ready to manifest its action, is only waiting for the decomposition of the body, the dislocation of its parts, to accomplish the purification and then the rebuilding of the cleansed and clarified substance with the aid of fire.

Thus it is the still coarse matter of the philosophical mercury which speaks in the epigraph *Mihi mori lucrum*. Not only does death grant it the physical benefit of a bodily envelope much more noble than the first, but it moreover gives it a vital energy which it did not possess and a generative faculty of which a bad constitution had previously deprived it.

Such is the reason why our Adept, in order to provide an appreciable image of the hermetic regeneration, by the death of the compost, has the ears sculpted, under the motto in parables, of this little subject.

Panel 3 --- Issuing from thick clouds, a hand whose forearm is ulcerated, holds an olive branch. This coat of arms, of a morbid character, bears the sign:

.PRVDENTI.LINITVR.DOLOR.

The Sage knows how to assuage his pain.

The olive branch, a symbol of peace and concord, marks the perfect union of the generating elements of the philosophers' stone. Now this stone, by the certain knowledge it brings, by the

truths it reveals to the philosopher, enables him to overcome the moral sufferings which affect other men and to vanquish physical pains by suppressing the cause and the effects of many illnesses.

The very elaboration of the Elixir demonstrates to him that death, a necessary transformation, albeit not a real annihilation, must not distress him. Much to the contrary, the soul, freed from the burden of the body, enjoys in full flight a marvelous independence totally bathed in this ineffable light only accessible to pure spirits. He knows that the phases of material vitality and spiritual existence succeed one another according to the laws that rule their rhythm and their periodicity. The soul leaves its earthly body only to animate a new one. Yesterday's old man is tomorrow's child. The vanished are met again, the lost ones are found, the dead are reborn. And the mysterious attraction which binds together beings and things of a similar evolution, reunites, without their knowledge, those who still live and those who no longer are. For the initiate, there is no genuine, absolute separation, and mere absence cannot cause him grief. He will easily recognize his affections even though they are donned in a different envelope because the spirit, of immortal essence and gifted with eternal memory, knows how to cause him to discern them...

These certainties, materially controlled throughout the labor of the Work, assure him an indefectible moral serenity, a calm amidst excitements, a contempt for mundane pleasures, a resolute stoicism, and, above all, this powerful comfort granted him by the secret knowledge of his origins and destiny.

On the physical plane, the medicinal properties of the Elixir shelter its fortunate possessor from physiological defects and misery. Thanks to it, the sage knows how to assuage his pain. Batsdorff ⁽²⁾ certifies that it cures all outer illnesses of the body --- ulcers, scrofula, excrescences, paralysis, wounds and such other afflictions, when dissolved in an appropriate liquor and applied to the wound by means of a cloth soaked in the liquor. On the other hand, the author of an illuminated alchemical manuscript ⁽³⁾ also praises the high virtues of the medicine of the sages. "The Elixir", he writes, "is a divine ash, more miraculous than not, giving of itself as can be seen according to necessity, refusing itself to no one, as much for the health of the human body and the nourishment of this decaying and transitory life, as for the resurrection of the imperfect metallic body" In truth, it surpasses all the theriaca and the most excellent medicines that men could possibly make, however subtle they might be. It renders the man who possesses it blessed, sober, prosperous, distinguished, daring, robust, magnanimous". Finally, Jacques Tesson ⁽⁴⁾ advises the new converts wisely on the use of the universal balm. "We have spoken, says the author by addressing the subject of the art, about the fruit of blessing which have come out of you; now we will say how you must apply to yourselves; it is to help the poor and not for worldly display; it is to heal the needy and the handicapped, and not the great and powerful of the world. For we must be careful to whom we give it and know whom we must heal among the infirmities and illnesses that afflict the human species. Administer this powerful remedy only under an inspiration from God who sees all, knows all, ordains all".

Panel 4 --- Here is now one of the major symbols of the Great Work: the figure of the Gnostic circle formed by the body of the snake which devours its tail, having for motto the Latin word

.AMICITIA.

Friendship.

The circular image is indeed the geometric expression of unity, affinity, equilibrium and harmony. All the points of the circumference being equidistant from the center and in close contact with one another they create a continuous, enclosed orb which has no point of beginning, and cannot have not an end, just as God in metaphysics is infinity in space and eternity in time.

The Greeks called this serpent the Ouroboros, from the words [*353-1] (*oura*), tail, and [*353-2] (*boros*), devouring. In the Middle Ages it was likened to the dragon by imposing on it an esoteric attitude and value similar to those of the Hellenic serpent. Such is the reason for the association with reptiles, whether natural or legendary, which were almost always found among the old authors. *Draco aut serpens qui caudam devoravit; serpens aut lacerta viridis quae propriam caudam devoravit,* ⁽⁵⁾ etc., they frequently wrote. On monuments, on the other hand, the dragon, allowing more movement and vividness in the decorative composition, seemed to be more favored by artists; it is the one preferably represented. This can be observed on the north portal of the church Saint-Armel at Ploermel (in the Department of Morhiban, Brittany, France) where several dragons, hooked in the sloping of the gables, form a wheel by biting their own tails. The famous stalls of Amiens also offer the curious figure of a dragon with the head of a horse and a winged body, ended by a decorative tail, the extremity of which the monster is devouring.

Given the significance of this emblem --- it is, with the seal of Solomon, the distinctive sign of the Great Work --- its meaning remains susceptible to various and sundry interpretations. The hieroglyph for the absolute union, for the indissolubility ⁽⁶⁾ of the four elements and the two principles restored to unity in the philosophers' stone, this universality allows the use and attribution to the various stages of the Work, since all of them aim at the same goal and are oriented towards the assemblage, the homogeneity of the first natures, towards the mutation of their native antipathy into a solid and stable friendship. Generally, the head of the dragon or of the Ouroboros marks the fixed part and its tail the volatile part of the compound. So does the commentator of Marc Fra Antonio ⁽⁷⁾ understand it: "This earth", he says, "while speaking of sulphur, by its igneous and innate dryness, attracts to itself its own humidity and consumes it; and because of it, it is compared to the dragon which devours its tail. Besides, it attracts and assimilates its humid counterpart only because it is of the same nature". Other philosophers make a different application, for example Linthaut ⁽⁸⁾, who connects it to the colored periods: "There are", he writes, "three principal colors which must show themselves in the Work, the black, the white, the red. The blackness, the first color, is called venomous dragon by the Ancients when they say: the dragon will devour its own tail". The esotericism is equivalent in *The Most Precious Gift of God* by Georges Auruch. David de Planis Campy, farther removed from the doctrine, only sees in it a version of the spagyric cohobations.

As for ourselves, we have always understood the Ouroboros as a complete symbol of the alchemical work and of its result. But, whatever the opinion of the scientists of our time may be about this figure, we can nevertheless be certain that all the attributes of Dampierre placed under the aegis of the serpent biting its tail, are exclusively related to the Great Work and present a specific character conforming to the secret teaching of the hermetic science.

Panel 5 --- Yet another vanished subject about which nothing can be deciphered. Only a few incoherent letters appear on the disintegrating limestone:

...CO.PIA...

Panel 6 --- A large six-ray star is shining on the waves of a moving sea. Above it the streamer bears this Latin motto engraved on it whose first word is written in Spanish:

.LVZ.IN.TENEBRIS.LVCET.

Light shines in the darkness.

You might wonder why we hold to be water what others consider to be clouds. But by studying the manner in which the sculptor represents water and clouds elsewhere, you will readily be convinced that there is not on our part any error, mistake or dishonesty. By this marine star, nevertheless, the author of the picture does not intend to represent the common asterias, vulgarly called starfish. The latter only has five radiating rays, whereas ours has six distinct branches. We must therefore see here an indication of a starry water, which is none other than our prepared mercury, our Virgin mother and her symbol, Stella maris (the Star of the Sea), the mercury obtained in the form of a white and shining metallic water which philosophers denominate star once more (from the Greek [*355-1] --- *aster* --- brilliant, shining). Thus the work of the art renders manifest and external that which before was diffuse in the coarse, vile, and dark mass of the primitive subject. From the obscure chaos, it makes the light flash forth after having assembled it and, from that point on, this light shines in the darkness like a star in the night sky. All chemists have known and know this subject although very few know how to obtain it from the radiant quintessence so deeply buried in the earthiness and the opacity of the body. This is why Philalethes ⁽⁹⁾ recommends to the student not to despise the astral signature, revealer of the prepared mercury. "Direct your course by the aspect of the North Star, which our Magnet will cause to appear to thee. The Wise man will rejoice, but the Fool will disesteem these things, nor will he learn Wisdom, even though he behold the Central Pole turned outwards, marked with the notable sign of the Omnipotent".

Strongly intrigued by the star, the significance and meaning of which he could not fathom, Hoefer ⁽¹⁰⁾ turned to the Hebrew Cabala. "Iesod ([*356-1])", he writes, "signifies at once the basis and the mercury, because mercury is the basis, the foundation of the art of transmutation. The nature of mercury is indicated by the name: [*356-2] (*Living God*), whose letters produce, by addition of their numerical values, the number 49, which is also given by the sum of the letters [*356-3] (*cocaf*), star. But what interpretation can we give of the word *cocaf*? Let us listen to the Kabbala: 'The characteristic of the true mercury consists in covering itself, through the action of heat, with a film more or less approximating the color of gold; and this can be done in the space of a single night'. Here is the mystery indicated by the word *cocaf*, star". This exegesis does not satisfy us. A film, whatever color it might be, does not in any way resemble a starred radiation and our own works answer for an effective signature which presents all the geometric and regular characteristics of a perfectly drawn star. And so do we prefer the less chemical but truer language of the ancient masters to this kabalistic description of the red oxide of hydrargyrum. "It is in light's nature", said the author of a famous book ⁽¹¹⁾, "to not be able to appear to our eyes without being clothed with a body of some kind, and this body must also be appropriate to receiving light; therefore where light is there must necessarily also be the vehicle of this light. Here is the easiest means to not err. Look then, with the light of your spirit, for the light clothed with darkness, and learn from it that the most vile of all subjects in the ignoramus' opinion". In an allegorical tale concerning the preparation of mercury, Trismosin ⁽¹²⁾ is yet more categorical; he asserts as we do, the visual reality of the hermetic seal. "At daybreak", says our author, "above the person of the king a very bright star was seen to come out and the light of the say illuminated the darkness". As for the mercurial nature of the support of the star (which is the sky of the philosophers), Nicolas Valois ⁽¹³⁾ makes it rather clear in the following passage: "The sages", he says, "name

their sea the entire Work, and as soon as the body is reduced to water, the same one from which it was originally made, the latter being called sea water because it is truly a sea in which several helmsmen were shipwrecked, not having this celestial body as their guide, which will never fail those who have known it once. It is this star which led the wise men to the birth of the Son of God, and the same one which makes us see the birth of this young king". Finally, in his *Catechism or Instruction for the Rank of Adept*, an appendix to his work called the *Flaming Star*, Baron Tschoudy informs us that the Freemasons called the heavenly body of the philosophers in that particular manner. "Nature", he says, "is not visible although it acts visibly, for it is but a volatile spirit, that operates in bodies and that is animated by the universal spirit we know in common Masonry under the respectable emblem of the Flaming Star".

Panel 7 --- At the bottom of a tree loaded with fruit, a woman is planting several pits into the earth. On the phylactery, one extremity of which is connected to the trunk and the other is unfolding above the person, we can read this Latin phrase:

TV.NE.CEDE.MALIS.

Do not succumb to errors.

It is an encouragement to persevere in the path followed and in the method used, which our philosopher is giving to the good artist, which artist takes pleasure in naively imitating the simplicity of nature, rather than vainly chasing moonbeams⁽¹⁴⁾.

The ancients often called alchemy the celestial agriculture, because it offers in its laws, circumstances and conditions the most intimate of connection with terrestrial agriculture. There is scarcely a classical author who does not draw his examples from, and does not establish his demonstrations on agricultural labor. The hermetic analogy thus appears founded on the art of the farmer. Just as one needs a seed to obtain an ear of corn --- *nisi granum frumenti* (if not with the seed of wheat) --- in the same way, it is essential first to possess the metallic seed, in order to multiply the metal. Now each fruit bears its seed within itself and each body, whatever it may be, possesses its own. This difficult point, which Philalethes calls the pivot of the art, consists in knowing how to extract, from metals or from minerals, this first seed. It is the reason why the artists, at the beginning of his work, must completely decompose that which has been assembled by nature because whosoever ignores the means of destroying metals also ignores the means of perfecting them. Having obtained the ashes of the body, these undergo calcinations, which will burn their heterogeneous, combustible parts, and will only leave the central salt, an incombustible and pure seed the flame cannot vanquish. The sages have given it the names of sulphur, first agent, or philosophical agent.

But any seed capable of germinating, growing, and fructifying requires proper soil. The alchemist also has need of a proper soil appropriate to the species and the nature of the seed; once more he has to ask the mineral kingdom for it. Yes, the second work will cost him more fatigue and time than the first. And this is also in agreement with the art of the farmer. Do we not see all the farmer's care directed toward the perfect and exact preparation of the soil? While the sowing is done quickly and effortlessly; the earth, on the other hand, demands to be tilled and ploughed several times, requires a fair spreading of the fertilizer, etc., a hard, long, and exacting work and its analogy can be found in the Philosophical Great Work.

Let then the true disciples of Hermes study all the simple and efficient means likely to separate the metallic mercury, the mother and wet nurse of this seed from which our embryo

is to be born; let them apply themselves to purifying this mercury and to exalting its powers, after the fashion of the farmer who increases the fecundity of the humus by frequently airing it out and by incorporating into it the necessary organic products. Above all, let them beware of the sophistic processes, capricious formulas used by ignorant or greedy ones. Let them ask nature, let them observe in what way it operates, let them know how to discern what its fashions are, and let them exercise their wits to imitate it closely. If they do not allow themselves to be rebuffed and if they do not succumb to errors profusely distributed even in the best of books, they will doubtlessly eventually see success crown their efforts. The totality of the art can be summed up in discovering the seed, sulphur, or metallic nucleus, in casting out into a specific earth or mercury and then in submitting these elements to fire according to a regimen of four increasing temperatures which constituted the four seasons of the Work. However the greatest secret is the one of the mercury, and it is in vain that one will search for its operation in the books of the most famous authors. Therefore, it is preferable to go from the known to the unknown by the analogical method, should one desire to approach the truth about a subject which caused the despair and ruin of so many investigators more enthusiastic than profound.

Panel 8 --- This bas-relief only bears the image of a circular shield and the historical injunction of the Spartan Mother:

.AVT.HVNC.AVT.SVPER.HVNC.

Either with him or on him.

Nature is addressing here the son of science preparing himself to undertake the first operation. We have already said that this quite tricky, practical operation invokes a real danger, since the artist must provoke the old dragon, the guardian of the orchard of the Hesperides, force it to fight, and then slay it without mercy if he does not want to be slain. To vanquish or die, such is the veiled meaning of the inscription. Our champion, in spite of his valor, could not use too much prudence for the future of the Work and his own destiny depends upon this first success.

The figure of the shield --- in Greek [*359-1] (*aspis*), shelter, protection, defense --- indicates to the student the need for a defensive weapon. As for the attacking weapon, it is the spear --- [*359-2] (*logche*), fate, destiny --- or tuck [*359-3] (*dialepsis*), separation --- which he must use. Unless he would rather resort to the means used by Bellerophon, riding Pegasus, to kill the Chimera. Poets claim that he buried, deep in the monster's throat, a wood stake, hardened with fire and covered with lead. The Chimera, irritated, would vomit flames; the lead melted, flowed into the beast's entrails, and this simple strategem got him the upper hand.

We shall, above all, call the beginner's attention to the spear and shield which are the best weapons a knight, expert and sure of himself, can use; the weapons that will signify, should he emerge victorious from the fight, his symbolic coat of arms by securing him the possession of our crown.

Thus does one, from a farmer, become a herald[*359-4] --- *kerus* --- the rot of another Greek word [*359-5] --- *kerukiophoros* --- one who bears the Caduceus). Others, of the same courage and convinced of their own strength, abandoned the sword, the spear and the glaive for the cross. Those were even more victorious for the material and demonic dragon never resisted the spiritual and almighty effigy of the Savior, the ineffable sign of the Spirit and of Light Incarnate: *In hoc signo vinces* ⁽¹⁵⁾.

It is said that for the wise ones, a few words suffice and we deem that we already have said enough for those who will take the trouble to try and understand us.

Panel 9 --- A country flower with the appearance of a poppy receives the light from the sun which is shining above it. This bas-relief has suffered from unfavorable atmospheric conditions or perhaps from the bad quality of the stone; the inscription which ornamented a streamer, traces of which we can still see, has been completely erased. As we have previously analyzed a similar object, (Series 2, panel 1), and as this motif can be the subject of several very different interpretations, we will keep silent for fear of a possible error, given the absence of its specific inscription.

(1) Translator's Note: In French "indissoluble" and "insolubl" are the same words, thus referring both to the physical and abstract properties.

(2) *Le Filet d'Ariadne* (Ariadne's Net), op. cit., p. 1.

(3) *La Generation et Operation du Grande-Oeuvre* (*The Creation and Operation of the Great Work*), Library of Lyons, France. Ms. quoted.

(4) Jacques Tesson: *Le Grande et Excellent Oeuvre des Sages,,*, (*The Great and Excellent Work of the Sages...*); Ms from the 17th century, Library of Lyons #971(900).

(5) Dragons or serpents devouring their tails; serpents or green lizards devouring their own tails.

(6) Translator's Note: "indissolubility" also indicates "insolubility" as both ideas are expressed by the same word in French.

(7) *La Lumiere sortant par soy-mesme des Tenebres, ou Veritable Theorie de la Pierre des Philosophes* (*The Light coming by itself out of the Darkness, or True Theory of the Stone of the Philosophers*), written in Italian verses; Paris, Libr. d. Houry, 1687, p. 271.

(8) Henri de Linthaut: *Commentaire sur le Tresor des Tresors de Christophe de Gramont* (*Commentary on the Treasure of Treasures by Christophe de Gramont*); Paris, Claude Morillon, 1610, p. 133.

(9) Translator's Note: *Eirenaeus Philalethes, Alchemical Works, Secrets Revealed: or, An Open Entrance to the Shut Palace of the King*, ch. 4.

(10) Ferdinand Hoefer: *Histoire de la Chimie* (*History of Chemistry*); Paris, Firmin Dido, 1866, p. 248.

(11) *La Lumiere sortant par soy-mesme des Tenebres* (*The Light coming by itself out of the Darkness*), op. cit.

(12) Salomon Trismosin: *La Toyson d'Or* (*The Golden Fleece*); Paris, Ch. Sevestre, 1612.

(13) *Les Cinq Livres de Nicholas Valois* (*The Five Books of Nicolas Valois*), ms. cit.

(14) Translator's Note: or, chimera.

(15) With this sign, you shall overcome.

THE CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE VIII

Fifth Series (Plate XXX)

Panel 1 --- A horned and hairy vampire, equipped with membranous, nervate, and clawed wings, with feet and hands in the shape of talons, is represented squatting. The inscription has this nightmarish character speak in Spanish verses:

.MAS.PENADO.MAS.PERDIDO.Y.MENOS.AREPANTIDO.

The more prejudicial you have been to me, the more you lost me, and the less I repented it.

This devil, an image of material coarseness as opposed to spirituality, is the hieroglyph for the first mineral substance such as it is found in metal-bearing deposits where miners go in order to tear it therefrom. It was formerly represented as the figure of Satan, in Notre-Dame de Paris, and the faithful, as a token of their scorn and aversion, came to put out their candles by plunging them in its mouth, that it held open. It was for the people, Master Pierre of Coignet ⁽¹⁾, our corner stone and the original block on which the entire Work is built.

It must be agreed that to be symbolized under such a deformed and monstrous appearance --- dragon, serpent, vampire, devil, Tarasqu. Etc. --- this unfortunate subject must have fallen into disgrace with Nature. In truth, its appearance has nothing seductive about it. Black, scaly, often covered with red spots or a yellow, crumbly and dull coating, having a strong and nauseous odor which the philosophers define as toxicum et venenum, it stains fingers when it is touched and seems to assemble within itself all that which can displease. Yet it is, this primitive subject of the sages, vile and despised by the ignorant ones, which is the only one, the sole dispense of the celestial water, our first mercury, and the great Alkahest ⁽²⁾. It is it, the loyal servant and the salt of the earth, what Madame Hillel-Erlanger calls Gilly and which causes his master to triumph over the influence of Vera ⁽³⁾. Thus it has been called the universal solvent, not because it is capable of dissolving all bodies in nature --- as many wrongly believe --- but because it can do everything in the small universe which the Great Work constitutes. In the 17th century, a time of impassioned discussions between chemists and alchemists on the principles of the old sciences, the universal solvent was the subject of ardent controversies. J.H. Pott ⁽⁴⁾, who applied himself to noting the many formulas of menstrual, and who strove to provide their rationale, brings us, more than anything, the proof that none of the formulas' inventors understood what the Adepts meant by their solvent. Although they certified that our mercury is metallic and homogeneous to metals, most of the seekers persisted in extracting it from matters more or less removed from the mineral kingdom. Some thought they were preparing it when they saturated the ruinous volatile spirit (ammonia) with any acid, and then circulated this mixture; others exposed thickened urine to air with the purpose of introducing the airy spirit into it, etc. Becher (*Physica Subterranea*, Frankfurt 1669) and Bohn (*De Alkali et Acidi Insufficiencia --- Letter on the Insufficiency of Acid and Alkali*) think that "the alkahest is the purest mercurial principle which can be removed either from mercury or from sea salt by specific processes". Zobel (*Margarita Medicinalis*) and the author of *Lullius Redivivus* prepare their solvent by saturating the Spirit of Sal Ammoniac (hydrochloric acid) with the Spirit of Tartar (potassium tartrate) and some crude tartar (impure potassium carbonate). Hoffman ⁽⁵⁾ and Poterius volatilized the salt of tartar by first dissolving it in water, exposing the liquor to putrefaction in an oak-wood vessel, and then submitting the precipitated earth to sublimation. "A solvent which leaves all the



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other ones far behind, assures Pott, is the precipitate resulting from the mixture of the corrosive sublimate and the sal ammoniac. Whosoever knows how to use it properly, will be able to consider it a true alkahest". Le Fecre, Agricola, Robert Fludd, de Nuysement, Le Breton, Etmuller, and others still prefer the spirit of dew as well as analogous extracts that have been prepared "with stormy rains or with the fatty film which floats on mineral waters". Finally, according to Lenglet-Dufresnoy, ⁽⁶⁾, Olaus Borrichius (*De Origine Chemiae et in conspectus Chemicorum Celebriorum*, num. XIV) "notes that Capt. Thomas Parry, an Englishman, saw this same science (alchemy) practiced in 1662 at Fez in Barbary, and that the great alkahest, the first matter of all the philosophers has been known for a long time in Africa by the most skilled Mohammedan artists".

To sum it up, all alkahest recipes proposed by authors who above all aim at the liquid form attributed to the universal solvent are useless, if not false, and only good for spagyrics. Our first matter is solid; the mercury which it provides always presents itself as saline in appearance and with a hard consistency. And this metallic salt, as Bernard Trevisan quite rightly said, is extracted from the Magnesia "by the reiterated destruction of the latter, by dissolving and by sublimating". With each operation the body fragments itself, disaggregates little by little, without apparent reaction, by abandoning many impurities; the extract, purified by sublimations, also loses heterogeneous parts so that its virtue becomes condensed in the end into a small mass of a volume and weight much inferior to that of the original mineral subject. This is what the Spanish axiom quite exactly justified, for the more reiterations, the more the broken and dissociated body is wronged and the less the quintessence which comes from it has reason to repent of it; on the contrary, it augments in strength, in purity, and in activity. By this very act our vampire acquires the strength of penetrating metallic bodies, of attracting their sulphur, or their true blood, and allows the philosopher to liken it to the nocturnal vampire of oriental legends.

Panel 2 ---A crown made of leaves and fruit: apples, pears, quince, etc., is also tied by ribbons the knots of which are also tightening four little laurel twigs. The epigraph which frames it teaches us that no one will obtain it if he doesn't abide by the laws of combat.

NEMO.ACCIPIT.QVI.NON.LEGITIME.CERTAVERIT.

Monsieur Louis Audiat sees in this subject a laurel crown; this should not surprise us; his observations are often imperfect and he is not preoccupied by the study of details. In fact, it is not the ivy wreath with which poets of Antiquity were crowned, nor the sweet laurel on the foreheads of victors, nor the palm leaves dear to the Christian martyrs, nor the myrtle, vine leaves, olive branches of the Gods, that are represented here, but quite simply the fruit-bearing crown of the sage. His fruit marks the abundance of his earthly goods acquired by the skillful practice of celestial agriculture: so much for profit and utility; a few laurel twigs, of such a discrete relief that they are barely noticed: so much for the honor of the hard-working artist. And yet this rustic garland which wisdom offers to the learned and virtuous investigators is not easily won. Our philosopher says it straight out: hard is the battle the artist must wage against the elements if he wants to overcome the great trial. Like the knight-errant, he must direct his steps toward to mysterious garden of the Hesperides and provoke the horrible monster defending the entrance. Such is, in keeping with the tradition, the allegorical language through which the sages intend to reveal the first and the most important of the Work's operations. In truth, it is not the person of the alchemist who defies and fights the hermetic dragon, but another beast, equally robust, in charge of representing him and that the artist, as a prudent spectator, always ready to intervene, must encourage, help, and protect. He is the fencing master of this strange and merciless duel.

Few authors have mentioned this first encounter and the danger it represents. To our knowledge, Cyliani is without doubt the Adept who went the farthest in the metaphoric description he presents of it. However, we have found nowhere else as detailed a tale, i.e., as exact in its images, as near to the truth and to reality as the great hermetic philosopher of the modern times: de Crano Bergerac. This brilliant man is not known enough, whose work, purposely mutilated, probably encompassed the entire scope of the science. As for us, we scarcely need M. de Sercy's testimony ⁽⁷⁾, asserting that Cyrano "received from the Author of Light and from the Master of Sciences (Apollo) lights which nothing can darken and knowledge at which no one can arrive", to recognize in him a true and powerful initiate.

De Crano Bergerac stages two fantastic beings representing the principles of Sulphur and Mercury, issuing from the four primary elements: the sulphurous Salamander, which thrives in the midst of flames, symbolizes the air and fire of which the sulphur possesses the dryness and the igneous ardor, and the Remora, the mercurial champion, heir to the earth and water and its cold and humid qualities. These names chosen on purpose owe nothing to whim or fantasy. [*367-1] (*Salamandra*) in Greek seems formed of [*367-2] (*sal*), the anagram for [*367-3] (*als*), salt, and of [*367-4] (*mandra*), stable; it is the salt of the stable, the salt of urine of the artificial saltpeter bed, the saltpeter of the old spagyrist --- *sal petri*, salt of stone --- which they still designate under the name of Dragon. The Remora, in Greek [*367-5] (*echeneis*), is this famous fish which was supposed to stop (according to some) or to direct (according to others) ships sailing in northern seas, subject to the influence of the North Star. It is the echeneis of which the Cosmopolite speaks, the royal dolphin which the characters of the *Mutus Liber* exert themselves to capture, the same one which accompanied and piloted, on the bas-relief ornamenting the fountain of Vertbois, the ship loaded with an enormous hewn stone. The echeneis is the pilot of the running waters, our mercury, the faithful friend of the alchemist, the one which has to absorb the secret fire, the igneous energy of the Salamander and finally, remains stable, permanent, always victorious, under the safekeeping and protection of his master. These two principles, of opposite natures and tendencies, of contrary disposition exhibit a relentless antipathy against each other, and an irreducible aversion for one another. Face to face, they furiously attack each other, defend themselves ruthlessly, and the truceless and merciless fight only ceases with the death of one of the antagonists. Such is the esoteric duel, appalling yet real, which the illustrious Cyrano ⁽⁸⁾ related in these terms"

"I had advanced about 400 Furlongs, when I perceived in the middle of a great Plain, as it were, two Bowls, which having rustled and turned a long time round one another, approached and then recoiled: And I observed that when they knocked one against the other, then were these great Claps heard; but going a little further on, I found that what at a distance I had taken for two Bowls, were two Animals; one of which, though round below, formed a Triangle about the middle, and his lofty head with ruddy locks, which floated upwards, spired into a Pyramide; his Body was bored like a Sieve, and through these little holes, that served him for Pores, thin flames glided, which seemed to cover him with a Plume of Fires.

"Walking about there, I met with a very venerable old Man, who observed that famous conflict, with no less curiosity than myself. He made me a sign to draw nigh, I obeyed, and we sat down by one another...

"He thereupon spake to me in this manner: 'In this Globe where we are, we should see the Woods very thin sown, by reason of the great number of the fiery Beasts that destroy them; were it not for the Animals' Frozen-Noses, which are at the desire of the Forests their Friends, come daily to cure these Sick Trees: I say cure, for no sooner have they, from their Icy Mouth, blown upon the coals of that Plague, but they put it out.

"In the World of the Earth, from whence both you and I come, the fiery Beast is called the Salamander; and the Animal Frozen-Nose, is known by the name of Remora. Now you must know; that the Remoras lived toward the extremity of the Pole, at the bottom of the Mare Glaciale; and it is the cold of these Fishes, evaporated through their Scales, which makes the Sea Water in these quarters to freeze, though it be Salt...

"That Stygian-Water wherewith the Great Alexander was poisoned, and whose Coldness petrified his Bowels, wa the Piss of one of these Animals... And so much for the Animals Frozen-Nose.

"But as to the Fiery Beasts, they lodge on Land under Mountains of burning Bitumen, such as Aetna, Vesuvius and other. The Pimples which you see upon the Breast of this beast, that proceed from the Inflammation of his Liver, are...

"Here we put a stop to our Talk, that we might be more attentive to that famous Duel. The Salamander attacked with much ardour; but the Remora defended impenetrable. Every dash they gave one another, begot a clap of Thunder; as it happens in the Worlds there abouts, where the Clashing of a hot Cloud with a cold, causes the same Report. At every glance of Rage which the Salamander darted against its Enemy, out of its Eyes flashed a reddish Light, that seemed to rekindle the Air in flying; it sweat boyling Light, that seemed to kindle the Air in flying; it sweat boyling Oyl, and pissed Aqua-fortis. The Remora on the other hand, that gross, square and heavy Animal, presented a Body scaled all over with Ysicles. Its large Eyes lookt like two Chrystal-plates, whose glances conveyed so chilling a light, that on what member of my Body it fixed them, I felt a shivering Winter-cold. If I thought to put my Hand before me, my Fingers were nummed; nay, the very Air about infected with its quality, condensed into Snow, the Earth hardened under his Steps; and I could reckon the Footings of the Beast, by the number of Chil-blancs, that welcomed me when I trode upon them.

"In the beginning of the Fight, the Salamander by the vigorous activity of its first heat, had put the Remora into a sweat; but at length that Sweat cooling again, glazed all the Plain with so slippery an Enamel, that the Salamander could not get up to the Remora without falling. The Philosopher and I knew very well, that the trouble of falling and rising so many times, had made it weary; for these Thunderclaps so dreadful before, that proceeded from the shock he gave its Enemy, were no more than the dull Sound of those little After claps, which denote the end of a Storm; and that dull Sound, deadened by degrees, degenerated into a Whizzing, like that of a hot Iron plunged into cold Water. When the Remora perceived, that the Fire was near an end, by the Weakness of the shock which was hardly felt by it, it raised it self upon an Angle of its Cube, and with all its weight fell upon the Breast of the Salamander with so good success, that the heart of the Salamander, wherein all the rest of its heat was contracted, bursting, made so fearful a Crack, that I know nothing in nature to compare it to. Thus died the Fiery Beast, under the lazy resistance of the Animal Frozen-nose.

"Sometimes after the Remora was gone, we approached the place of Battle; and the old Man having daubed his hands over with the Earth laid hold on the Dead Body of the Salamander. Give me but the Body of this Animal, said he, and I've no need for Fire in my Kitchen; for provided it be hung upon the Pot-hood, it will Boyl and Roast all that's laid upon the Hearth. As for the Eyes, I'll carefully keep them; if they were cleaned from the Shades of Death, you'd take them for two little Suns. The Ancients of our World knew well what use to make of them; they called them burning-lamps ⁽⁹⁾, and never hung them up but in the Pompous Monuments of the Illustrious Persons. The Moderns have found some of them, by digging

into these famous Tombs; but their ignorant Curiosity made them put them out, thinking to find behind the broken membranes, the Fire which they saw shine there".

Panel 3 --- A 16th century piece of artillery is represented at the moment of firing. It is surrounded with a phylactery bearing this Latin sentence:

.SI.NON.PERCVSSERO.TERREBO.

While I may reach no one, at least I will terrify.

It is of course obvious that the creator of this subject meant to speak figuratively. We understand that he is directly addressing lay-people, investigators lacking science, therefore incapable of understanding these compositions, but who nevertheless will be surprised, by their number as well as by their singularity and their lack of coherence. The contemporary sages will take this ancient work to be that of an insane person. And just as a canon wrongly aimed only surprises by its noise, our philosopher thinks with reason that if he cannot be understood by all, everyone will be astonished by the enigmatic, strange, and discordant characteristics which so may inexplicable symbols and scenes take on.

Thus do we believe that the curious and picturesque aspect of these figures holds the attention of the spectator without enlightening him. This is what seduced M. Louis Audiat as well as the other authors who turned their attention to Dampierre; in the final analysis, their descriptions are nothing but the noise of confused, vain, and insignificant words. Albeit useless to the instruction of the curious one, they nevertheless bring us the testimony that, in our opinion, no observer has been able to discover the general idea hidden behind those motifs nor the far-reaching scope of the mysterious teaching which emerges from them.

Panel 4 --- Narcissus strives to catch, in the basin where he admired himself, his own image, the cause of his metamorphosis into a flower, so that he can relive thanks to the water that brought him death:

VT.QVAS.PERIIT.VIVERE.POSSIT.AQVAS.

Narcissuses are plants with white or yellow flowers, and these flowers are what made mythologists and symbolists distinguish them; indeed they offer the respective colorations of the two sulfurs charged with orienting the two magisteries, All alchemists know white sulphur should be exclusively used for the silver Work and yellow sulphur for the solar Work, carefully avoiding to mix them according to Nicholas Flamel's excellent piece of advice or a monstrous generation without future and without virtue would otherwise result from it.

Narcissus is here the emblem of the dissolved metal. Its Greek name [*371-1] (*Narkissos*) comes from the root [*371-2] (*Narke*) or [*371-3] (*Narka*), numbness, torpor. Reduced metals, whose life is latent, concentrated, and somnolent, appear for this very reason to remain in a state of inertia analogous to that of hibernating animals or patients under the influence of a narcotic ([371-4 --- *narkoticos* --- Greek root [*371-5] --- *Narke*). They are said to be dead compared to alchemical metals which the art has exteriorized and vivified. As for the sulphur, extracted by the solvent --- the mercurial water of the basin --- it remains Narcissus' sole representative, i.e., the dissociated and destroyed metal. But just as the image reflected in the waters' mirror bears all the apparent characteristics of the real object, in the same way the sulphur keeps the specific properties and the metallic nature of the decomposed body. So that this sulphur principle, the true seed of metal finding nutritive, living, and vivifying elements

in the mercury, can thereafter generate a new being, similar to itself, however, of a superior essence, and capable of obeying the will of evolutionary dynamism.

It is therefore with reason that Narcissus, metal transformed into flower, or sulphur --- for sulphur, say the philosophers, is the flower of all metals --- hopes to regain existence, thanks to the specific virtue of the waters which provoked its death. If he cannot extract his image from the water which imprisons it, this latter at least will enable hi to materialize it as a "double" in which he will have been preserved.

Thus that which causes the death of one of the principles gives life to the other, as the initial mercury, the metallic living water, dies so as t provide the dissolved sulphur of the metal, the elements of its resurrection. This is why the ancients have always asserted that the living had to be killed for the dead to be resuscitated. The practical application of this axiom assures the sage of the possession of the live sulphur, principal agent of the stone and of the transformations which are to be expected from it. It allows him yet to realize the second axiom of the Work: to join life to life, by uniting the mercury, the first born from nature, to this active sulphur so as to obtain the mercury of the philosophers, a pure, subtle, responsive, and living substance. Here is the operation that the sages have reserved under the expression of chemical wedding, or mystical marriage of the brother and the sister --- for they both are of the same blood and of the same origin --- of Gabritius and Beya, of the Sun and the Moon, of Apollo and Diana. This last word provided cabalists with the famous sigh of Apollonius of Tyana, under which one thought to recognize a so-called philosopher although the miracles of this fictional character, of incontestably hermetic characteristics, were for the initiates marked with the symbolic seal, and devoted to alchemical esotericism.

Panel 5 --- Noah's ark floating on the waters of the Flood while near it a small boat threatens to sink. In the sky of the subject the following words can be read:

.VERITAS.VINCIT.

Truth is victorious.

We believe we already mentioned that the ark represents the totality of the materials, prepared and united under the names of compound, rebis, amalgam, etc., and which properly constitute the molten core of the earth (archaeus), the igneous matter, basis of the philosophers' stone. The Greek word [*372-1] (*arke*) means beginning, principle, source, origin. Under the agency of an external fire, exciting the inner fire of the archaeus, the entire compost becomes liquid and this liquid substance that fermentation agitates and puffs up, takes among the authors the characteristics of a powerful flood. First yellowish and muddy, it is given the name of brass which is none other than the name of the mother of Diana and Apollo, Latona⁽¹⁰⁾. The Greeks called her [*372-2] (*leitōs*), with the Ionic sense of common good, common possession, common house ([*372-3] --- *to leitōn*), meaning the protective envelope, common to the double embryo⁽¹¹⁾. Let us note in passing that the cabalists, with one of the puns for which they were famous, have taught that fermentation had to occur by means of a wooden vessel or better yet, in a cask cut in half to which they applied the qualifier of hollow oak tree. Latona, the princess becomes in the language of the Adepts, La Tonne (French for the tun), le tonneau (French for the cask), which explains why beginners have such a difficult time identifying the secret vessel where our matters are fermenting.

After the required length of time, one can see ascending to the surface, floating and ceaselessly moving under the effect of boiling a very thin film, as a meniscus, which the sages

have named the island of the philosopher ⁽¹²⁾, the first manifestation of the thickening and coagulation. This is the famous island of Delos, in Greek [*373-1] (*Delos*), that is to say apparent, clear, certain, which assures an unhoped for shelter for Latona fleeing Juno's persecutions and fills the artist's heart with pure joy. This floating island which Poseidon with one blow of his trident caused to emerge from the bottom of the sea is also Noah's saving ark carried by the waters of the Flood. "*Cum viderem quod aqua sensim carassoir*", said Hermes, "*duriorque fieri inciperet, gaudebam; certo ebim sciebam, ut invenirem quod querebam*" ⁽¹³⁾.

Progressively and under the continuous action of an internal fire the film develops, thickens, and spreads until it covers the entire surface of the melted glass. The moving island is then fixed and this spectacle gives to the alchemist the assurance that, for Latona, the time for labor has come. At that moment, mystery reassumes its right. A heavy, dark, blackish-blue cloud rises and passes off into the air from the hot and stabilized island, covers with darkness this parturient earth, envelopes and hides all things with its opacity, fills the philosophical sky with Cimmerian darkness ([*373-2] --- *kimbericon* --- mourning clothes) and, in the great eclipse of the sun and the moon, it conceals from the eyes the supernatural birth of the hermetic twins, the future parents of the stone.

The Mosaic tradition says that God, towards the end of the Flood, caused a hot wind to blow on the waters which evaporated them and lowered their level. The mountain tops then emerge from the huge sheet of water and the Ark then comes and lands on Mount Ararat in Armenia. Noah, opening the vessel's windows releases the crow, which is for the alchemists, and in his own minute genesis, the replica of the Cimmerian darkness, of these sinister clouds that accompany the hidden elaboration of new beings and regenerated bodies.

By this agreement of evidences, and the physical evidence of the work itself, truth is victorious in spite of those who deny, of the men of little faith always ready to dismiss into the domain of illusion and fantasy, the positive reality of which they could not understand because it is not known, and taught even less.

Panel 6 --- A woman kneeling at the foot of a tomb, on which this bizarre word can be read, TAIACIS, seems to be moved by the deepest despair. The streamer embellishing this figure bears the inscription:

VICTA.JACET.VIRTVS.

Virtue lies vanquished.

Andre Chenier's ⁽¹⁴⁾ motto, says Louis Audiat as an explanation, without taking into account the time elapsed between the Renaissance and the French Revolution. The topic here is not the poet but the virtue of the sulphur, or the gold of the sages which rests under the stone, waiting for the total decomposition of its perishable body. For the sulphurous earth, dissolved in the mercurial water, prepares through the death of the compound the release of this virtue, which is actually the sulphur's soul, or fire proper. And this virtue is a temporary prisoner of the bodily envelope or the Spirit of God moves upon the face of the waters, until the formation of the new body, just as Moses teaches in Genesis 1:2.

It is therefore, the hieroglyph for the mortification that we have before our eyes, and one that recurs in the engravings of the Pretiosa Margarita novella with which Petrus Bonus of Lombardy has illustrated his drama of the Great Work. Many philosophers took up this mode of expression and veiled under funereal or macabre topics, the putrefaction specifically

applied to the second Work, that is to say the operation charged with decomposition and liquefying the philosophical sulphur, issuing from the first labor, into a perfect Elixir. Basil Valentine shows us a skeleton standing in its own coffin, in one of his *Twelve Keys* and he depicts a burial scene in another. Flamel not only illustrated the humanized symbols of the Great Art in the Cemetery of the Innocents, but he also decorated his tombstone that is now exhibited in the Chapel of the Museum of Cluny with a corpse eaten by worms, and this inscription:

From the earth have I come and unto the earth I return.

Senior Hadith locks up inside a clear sphere a fleshless, dying person. Henri de Lintaut draws, on a page of the manuscript *Aurora*, the inanimate body of a crowned king lying down on a tombstone while his spirit, in the shape of an angel rises toward the lantern lost in the clouds. As for us, in the fashion of these great masters, we have exploited the same theme in the frontispiece of *The Mystery of the Cathedrals*.

As for the woman who, on the tomb of our panel, translates her regrets with disorganized gestures, she represents the metallic mother of sulphur; the curious word engraved on the stone covering her child: *Taiacis* belongs to her. This baroque term. Issuing perhaps from our adept's whim, is in truth but a Latin sentence with the words grouped together and written backwards so as to be read starting from the end: *Sic ai at, alas!* Thus, at least (can he be reborn). Supreme hope within supreme grief. Jesus himself had to suffer in his flesh, die, and remain three days in his sepulcher, in order to redeem mankind, and to finally resuscitate in the glory of his human incarnation, and in the accomplishment of his divine mission.

Panel 7 --- Represented in full flight, a dove holds in its beak an olive branch. This subject is distinguished by the inscription:

.SITE.FATA.VOCANT.

If Fate calls you to it.

The emblem of the dove with the green branch is given to us by Moses in his description of the universal Flood. He says indeed (Gen. 8:11) that Noah, having sent forth a dove, it came in to him in the evening, bringing the green branch of an olive tree. This is par excellence the sign of the true path and the proper progression of the operations. For as the labor of the Great Work is a short version and a reduction of Creation, all the circumstances of the divine work must be found on a smaller scale in that of the alchemist. As a consequence, when the Patriarch sets forth the crow from the Ark, we must understand that in our work it has to do with the first durable color, that is to say black, because when the death of the compound becomes effective, the matters putrefy and take on a very dark blue coloration whose metallic reflection allows comparison with the feathers of a crow. Furthermore, the biblical tale speculates that this bird, held back by corpses, does not come back to the ark. Nevertheless, the analogical reason that makes us attribute the term crow to the color black, is not only founded on a resemblance; the philosophers have also given to the compost that has reached the point of decomposition the expressive name of "corps bleu" (blue body --- that gave the old French medieval curse) and the cabalists that of "corps beau" ⁽¹⁵⁾ (beautiful body) not that it is pleasant to see but because it brings the first evidence of activity of the philosophical matters. However, in spite of the sign of auspicious presage which the authors agree to recognize in the appearance of the black color, we recommend only to greet these demonstrations with reserve, by attributing to them no more value, even in the midst of

foreign substances, provided these substances are treated according to the rules of the art. This criterion then is insufficient, although it justifies the well known axiom that all dry matter dissolves and corrupts in the humidity which is natural and homogeneous to it. This is the reason why we warn the beginner and we advise him, before giving way to a short-lived joy, to prudently wait for the manifestation of the color green, the symptom of the dryness of the earth, the absorption of the water, and the growth of the newly formed body.

And so, brother, if heaven deigns to bless your work and, in the word of the adepts, *si te fata vacant*, if fate calls you to it, you will first obtain the olive branch, the symbol of peace and union of the elements; then the white dove which will have brought it to you. Only then will you be sure to possess this admirable light, this gift of the Holy Ghost which Jesus sent on the 50th day ([*376-1] --- *Pentekoste*) --- to his beloved apostles. Such is the material consecration of the initiatory baptism and the divine revelation. "And straightway coming up out of the water", says St Mark (1:10) "John saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him".

Panel 8 --- Two forearms whose hands are joining, emerge out of a row of clouds and bear the motto:

.ACCIPPE.DAQVE.FIDEM.

Receive my word and give me yours.

This motif is on the whole nothing but a translation of the sign used by the alchemists to express the element water. Clouds and arms compose a triangle with its summit directed downward, a hieroglyph for water, opposed to fire, which is symbolized by a similar triangle, but directed upward.

Surely we could not recognize our first mercurial water in this emblem of union, since the two hands holding each other in a pact of fidelity and attachment belong to two separate individualities. We have said, and we repeat here, that the initial mercury is a simple product and the first agent in charge of extracting the sulphurous and igneous part from metals. However, while the separation of sulphur by this solvent allows it to retain a few portions of mercury or allows this latter to absorb a certain quantity of sulphur, although these combinations can receive the denomination of philosophical mercury, nevertheless, we should not hope to achieve the stone by means of this mixture alone. Experience demonstrates that a philosophical mercury that has been subjected to distillation easily abandons its fixed body, leaving the pure sulphur at the bottom of the retort. On the other hand, and in spite of the assertions of authors who agree to give mercury preponderance in the work, we notice that the sulphur designates itself as the essential agent, since in the final analysis, it is the sulphur which remains exalted in the final product of the work under the name of Elixir, or multiplied under that of the philosophers' stone. So, whatever it may be, mercury remains submitted to sulphur because it is the servant and the slave which, allowing itself to be absorbed, disappears and merges with its master. Consequently, as the universal medicine is resulting from a true generation, and as generation can only be accomplished with the help of two factors, of similar species but different sex, we must recognize that the philosophical mercury is powerless to produce a stone, because it is alone. Yet it holds in the work the role of female, but this latter, say d'Espagnet and Philalethes, must be united to a second male, if we want to obtain the compound known under the name of Rebis, the first matter of the Magistry.

This is the mystery of the hidden word, or *verbum dismissum*, which our Adept received from his predecessors, and that he passes on to us under the veil of the symbol, and for the preservation of which he asks us for ours, that is to say the oath not to uncover that which he deemed needed to be kept hidden: *accipe daque fidem* (Receive my word and give me yours).

Panel 9 --- On a rocky soil two doves unfortunately beheaded, stand opposite each other. They have as an epigraph the Latin proverb:

.CONCORDIA.NVTRIT.AMOREM.

Concord nourishes love.

Eternal truth whose application we find everywhere on earth and that the great Work confirms by the most striking examples that it is possible to encounter in the order of mineral things. The hermetic work as a whole is indeed nothing but a perfect harmony, realizes in accordance with the natural tendencies of inorganic bodies among themselves, of their chemical affinity, and, if the word is not too excessive, of their reciprocal love.

The two birds composing the subject of our bas-relief represent the famous Doves of Diana, objects of despair for so many seekers and the famous enigma devised by Philalethes to cover the artifice of the double mercury of the sages. By proposing this obscure allegory to the sagacity of work candidates, the great adept did not give detail as to the origin of these birds; he only teaches in the briefest fashion that "the doves of Diana are inseparably enveloped in the eternal embraces of Venus". Diana with "the lunar horns", this first mercury of which we have spoken many times under the name of universal solvent. Its whiteness, its silvery luster, also brought it the name of Moon of the Philosophers and Mother of the Stone; it is this sense that Hermes means when he says, speaking of the Work "the Sun is its father and the Moon its mother". Limojon de Saint-Didier, to help the investigator decipher the enigma writes in *The Interview Between Eudoxus and Pyrophilus*: "Finally consider the means by which Geber teaches us to make the required sublimations of the art; as for myself I cannot do more than to make the same wish that another philosopher made: *Sidera Veneris, et corniculatae Dianae tibi propitia sunt*" ⁽¹⁶⁾. Therefore the Doves of Diana can be seen as the two parts of the dissolving mercury --- the two points of the Lunar crescent --- as opposed to one point for Venus who must hold her favorite doves very closely embraced. The correspondence is confirmed by the dual quality, volatile and airy, of the initial mercury whose emblem has always been taken among birds and from the very matter out of which mercury comes, a chaotic, sterile, rocky earth on which the doves are resting. When, say the Scriptures, the Virgin Mary had accomplished, in conformity to the law of Moses, the seven days of purification (Ex. 13:2), Joseph accompanied her to the temple of Jerusalem so as to introduce the Child and to present an offering, in accordance with the law of the Lord (Lev. 12: 6,8) that is to say, two little turtledoves or two young pigeons. Thus appears in the sacred text the mystery of the Ornithogal, this mystery milk of birds --- [*379-1] --- *Ornithon*) of which the Greeks spoke as a most extraordinary and extremely rare thing. "To milk the milk of birds ([*379-2] --- *Ornithon gala amelgein*) was among them a proverb which meant to succeed, to know the favors of destiny and success in all undertaking. And we must agree that one must be chosen by Providence to discover the Doves of Diana and to possess the ornithogals, the Hermetic synonym of the milk of the virgin, dear to Philalethes. [*379-3] (*Ornis*), in Greek, not only indicates a bird in general, but more specifically, the rooster and the hen from which perhaps the word [*379-4] (*ornithos gala*), hen's milk ⁽¹⁷⁾ has been derived, obtained by shaking an egg yolk in hot milk. We will not dwell on these relationships because they would unveil the secret operation hidden behind the expression of Doves of Diana. Let us

nevertheless say that the plants called ornithogals are bulbed lilaceae, with flowers of a beautiful white color, and it is known that the lily is, par excellence, the emblematic flower of Mary.

(1) Translator's note: The name given to it, Master Pierre of Coignet, means literally, the Master Stone of the Corner.

(2) The term alkahest, attributed sometimes to Van Helmont, sometimes to Paracelsus, would be the equivalent of the Latin *alkali est* and would provide the reason why so many artists have worked to obtain it by starting to work with alkalies. For us, alkahest derives from the Greek words [364-1] (*alka*), a Dorian word used for [*364-2] (*alke*), strength, vigor, and [*** 364-3] (*eis*), place or still from [*364-4] (*astria*), hearth, the place or the hearth of energy.

(3) Irene Hillel-Erlanger: *Voyages en Kaleidoscope (Travels in Kaleidoscope)*; Paris, G. Cres, 1919.

(4) J. H. Pott: *Dissertations Chymiques; Dissertation sur les Soufres des Metaux*; thesis defended in Hall in 1716; T. Herissant, Paris, 1759

(5) Hoffman: *Notes sur Poterius in Opera Omnia*; 16 vol., Geneva 1748-1754.

(6) *Histoire de la Philosophie Hermetique*; Paris, Coustelier, 1742, vol. 1, p. 442.

(7) Dedication to the French edition of *The Comical History of the States and Empires of the World of the Sun*; Paris, Bauche, 1910, addressed by M. de Sercy to M. de Cyrano Mauvieres, brother of the author.

(8) De Cyrano Bergerac: *The Comical History of the States and Empires of the World of the Sun; History of the Birds*; translated by A. Lovell, H. Rhodes, London, 1687, p. 160-168.

(9) The ardent lamps, also said to be perpetual or inextinguishable, are one of the most surprising realizations of hermetic science. They are made of liquid Elixir, brought to a radiant state and maintained in a vacuum pushed as far as possible. In his *Dictionnaire des Art et des Sciences*, Paris, 1731, Th. De Corneille says that in 1401, "a peasant unearthed near the Tiber river some distance from Rome, a lamp of Pallas which had been burning for more than 2000 years and, as was mentioned by the inscription, that nothing could put out. As soon as a hole was made in the clay the flame was immediately extinguished". Under Pope Paul III's pontificate (1534-1549), a perpetual lamp was also discovered in the tomb of Tullia, daughter of Cicero, which was still burning and giving a bright light although the tomb had not been opened for 1550 years. The Rev. S. Mateer of the Missions of London, reports a lamp from the temple of Trevaudrum of the kingdom of Travancore (S. India); "This lamp, made of gold, has been shining 'in a hollow covered by a stone' for more than 1230 years and is still burning today".

(10) Translator's note: Brass in French is "laiton", very close to the word Lato or Latone meaning Latona.

(11) Linguists believe, moreover, that Leto is close to Lathein, secondary aorist infinitive form of Lanthanein, meaning kept hidden, concealed to the eyes, to be hidden or unknown, which is in accordance with the dark sentence we will soon see.

(12) Cf . in particular The Cosmopolite in *Traite du Sel (Treatise on Salt)*, p. 78, and the author of the *Songe Verd (Green Dream)*.

(13) When I saw this water gradually thickening and hardening, then I rejoiced for I jknew for certain that I would find what I was looking for.

(14) Translator's note: Andre Chenier (1762-1794) was a French poet who died during the French Revolution. He lived roughly 200 years after the panels at Dampierre were carved.

(15) Translator's note: Corbeau (raven, crow) and Corps beau (beautiful body) sound exactly alike in French.

(16) "May the stars of Venus and the horn of Diana be favorable to you".

(17) Translator's note: The French for eggnog is "laite de poule" (i.e., hen's milk).

THE CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE IX

Sixth Series (Plate XXXI)

Panel 1 --- Piercing the clouds, a man's hand throws seven sphere against a rock and they rebound toward him. This bas-relief is ornamented with the inscription:

.CONCVDSSVS.SVRGO.

Hit, I bounce back.

An image and reaction just like the hermetic axiom: *Solve et coagula*, dissolve and coagulate.

A similar subject can be found at Bourges on one of the ceiling panels of the Chapel Lallemand; but the spheres are replaced by chestnuts. Yet this fruit, which, because of its spiky pericarp, was given the common name of hedgehog (Greek [*383-1] --- *echino* --- urchin, sea urchin), is a rather exact figuration of the philosophers' stone such as it can be obtained through the brief way. Indeed it appears to be made of a sort of crystalline and translucent, more or less spherical nucleus, of a color similar to that of balas ruby, enclosed in a more or less thick, russet, opaque, dry capsule covered with asperities, which at the end of the Work is often cracked, sometimes even opened like the hull of walnuts and chestnuts. These are indeed the fruits of the hermetic labor that the heavenly hand throws against the rock, the emblem of our mercurial substance. Each time the fixed and perfect stone is taken again by the mercury in order to dissolve itself in it, to nourish itself from it once more, to augment not only in weight and volume, but also in energy, it returns through the coction to its original state, color, and appearance. It can be said that after having such the mercury it goes back to its starting point. These are stages of falling and rising, of solution and coagulation characterizing the successive multiplications that give for each rebirth of the stone a theoretical power twice that of the previous one. Nevertheless, and although many authors envision no limit to this exaltation, we think with some other philosophers that it would be unwise, at least as far as transmutation and medicine are concerned, to go beyond the seventh reiteration. This is the reason why Jean Lallemand and the Adept of Dampierre have only represented seven spheres or chestnuts on the motifs about which we speak.

Unlimited for the speculative philosophers, the multiplication however is limited for practical considerations. The more the stone progresses the more penetrating it becomes and the quicker its elaboration; at each stage of augmentation, it only requires the eighth of the time required for the preceding operation. Generally --- and we are talking here about the long way --- the fourth reiteration requires seldom more than two hours; the fifth thus takes a minute and a half, while twelve seconds would suffice to achieve the sixth; the instantaneousness of such an operation would make it unpractical. On the other hand, the intervention of the continuously increasing weight and volume would force us to keep aside a great part of the resulting product, for want of the required corresponding ration of mercury, the preparation of which is time-consuming and fastidious. Finally, the stone multiplied to the fifth and sixth degrees would demand, given its igneous power, an important mass of pure gold to orient it toward the metallic --- otherwise we would be liable to lost the whole thing. From any standpoint, it is preferable not to push the subtlety too far of an agent already gifted with such a considerable energy, unless, leaving aside the scope of metallic and medical possibilities, you want to possess this Universal Mercury, shiny and luminous in darkness, in order to make



CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE-SUR-BOUTONNE
 Panels of the Upper Gallery - Sixth Series

J. Champagne

a perpetual lamp. But the passing from the solid to the liquid state which must be accomplished here, as it is eminently dangerous, can only be attempted by a very learned and most skillful master.

From that which proceeds, we must conclude that the material impossibilities mentioned about transmutation tend to ruin the thesis of an increasing and indefinite geometric progression based on the number ten, dear to pure theoreticians. Let us guard against thoughtless enthusiasm and never let our judgments be outwitted by the specious arguments and the brilliant but hollow theories of the lovers of the marvelous. Science and nature keep enough marvels in store to satisfy us, without it having to feel the need to add to it the vain fantasies of imagination.

Panel 2 --- This bas-relief presents a dead tree with cut branches, and pulled out roots. It bears no inscription save two signs of alchemical notation engraved on a cartouche; one, a schematic figure of a level, expresses Sulphur; the other an equilateral triangle pointing up, indicated Fire.

The dried up tree is a symbol of the common metals reduced from their ores and molten. The high temperatures of metallurgical ovens have caused all the activity they possessed in their natural mineral bed to be lost. This is why the philosophers qualify them as dead and recognize them as being improper to the labor of the Great Work until they have been revived or reincarnated, to use the expression hallowed by usage, by this inner fire, which never completely leaves them. For the metals, fixed in the industrial form we know them to have, yet preserve at the very depth of their substance, the soul that common fire has caused to cave in and condense but was not able to destroy. And this soul, the sages have named fire or sulphur because it is truly the agent of all the mutations, of all the accidents observed in metallic matter, and the incombustible seed that nothing can totally ruin, neither the violence of strong acids, nor the fire of the furnaces. This great principle of immortality charged by God Himself to ensure and maintain the perpetuity of the species, and to reform the perishable body, subsists and can be found even in the ashes of calcined metals when the latter undergo the disaggregation of their parts and see the consumption of their bodily envelopes.

Therefore the philosophers deemed, not without reason, that the refractory qualities of the sulphur, its resistance to fire, could only belong to fire or to some spirit of an igneous nature. This is what led them to give it the name under which it is designated and which certain artists believe to come from its appearance although it bears no relation whatsoever to common sulphur. In Greek sulphur is said [*385-1] (*theion*), a term whose root is [*385-2] (*theios*), which means divine, marvelous, supernatural; [*385-3] (*to theion*) not only expresses divinity but also the magical, extraordinary aspect of a thing. As for the philosophical sulphur, considered the God and animating force of the Great Work, it reveals by its actions a formative energy comparable to that of the divine Spirit. So, and although we should yet attribute precedence to mercury --- in order to remain in the sequence of the successive acquisitions --- we must acknowledge that it is to sulphur, the incomprehensible soul of metals, that our practice owes its mysterious and somehow supernatural nature.

Therefore, look for sulphur in the dead trunk of common metals and you will obtain at the same time the natural and metallic fire which is the main key of the alchemical labor. "This is", says Limojon de Saint-Didier, "the great mystery of the art since all the others depend upon the understanding of this one. I would be satisfied, adds, the author, if I were allowed to unequivocally reveal this secret to you, but I cannot do that which no philosopher believed to be in his power to do. All that you can reasonably expect from me is to tell you that the

natural fire is a potential fire which does not burn the hands but renders its efficiency apparent whenever it becomes excited by an external fire".

Panel 3 --- An hexagonal pyramid, made of riveted sheet metal, bears, hooked on its side panels, various emblems of chivalry and hermeticism, pieces of a suit of armor and honorable pieces: targes, armet, arm-guard, gauntlets, crown, and garlands. Its epigraph is taken from a verse of Virgil (*Aeneid XI*, 641):

.SIC.ITVR.AS.ASTRA.

Thus is one immortalized.

This pyramidal construction, the shape of which recalls the hieroglyph adopted to designate fire, is not other than the Athanor, a word by which the alchemists signified the philosophical furnace essential to the Work's maturation. Two side doors have been installed, facing each other: they block out glass windows which allow observation of the phases of the work. Another one, placed at the basis gives access to the fire; finally, a little cover near the top serves as a heat register and exhaust vent for the gases produced by the combustion. Inside if we rely on the very detailed descriptions given by Philalethes, Le Tesson, Salmon, Pierre Vicot, Huginus a Barma, etc., the Athanor is designed so as to receive an earthen or metallic plate called nest or arena because the egg undergoes incubation in the warm sand (Latin arena, sand). As for the combustible agent used for heating, it often varies although many authors admit they prefer thermogenic lamps.

At least this is what the masters teach about their furnaces. But the Athanor, the dwelling of the mysterious fire, claims kinship with a less common design. It is more in accordance with hermetic esotericism, it seems to us, to understand that it is through this secret furnace --- the prison of an invisible flame --- that the substance is prepared, the amalgam or the rebis, used as an envelope and matrix of a central core where these latent capabilities are sleeping, which the common fire will soon activate. As matter alone is the vehicle of the natural and secret fire, the immortal agent of all our achievements, it alone remains for us the true and unique Athanor (from the Greek [*** 386-1] (*athanatos*), which renews itself and never dies). Philalethes tells us about the secret fire, which sages could not do without as it is the one responsible for all metamorphoses within of the compounds, that it is of metallic essence and sulphurous origin. It is acknowledged as a mineral because it is born from the primary mercurial substance, the unique source of all metals; and sulphurous because this fire during the extraction of the metallic sulphur has taken on the specific qualities "of the father of metals". It is therefore a twofold fire --- the twofold fiery man of Basil Valentine --- who contains at once the attractive, agglutinating, and organizing virtues of mercury and the drying, coagulating, and fixative properties of sulphur. Whoever has at all any smatterings of philosophy, will easily understand that this twofold fire, the animating agent of the rebis, as it only needs heat to go from potentiality to actuality and to make its power effective, could not be the one of the furnace although it metaphorically represents our Athanor, that is to say the topos of energy, of the principle of immortality enclosed in the philosophical compound. This twofold fire is the pivot of the art, and according to Philalethes expression, the first agent which causes the wheel to turn and the axle to move", and so it is often called fire of the wheel, because it seems to develop its action according to a circular fashion, whose aim is the conversion of the molecular structure, a rotation symbolized by the wheel of fortune and by the Ouroboros.

And so matter destroyed, mortified, then recomposed into a new body, thanks to the secret fire which is aroused by the one of the furnace, gradually raises itself with the help of multiplications, up to the perfection of the pure fire, veiled under the figure of the immortal Phoenix: sic itur ad astra (thus is one immortalized). Similarly, the workman, faithful servant of nature, acquires with the knowledge of the sublime, the high title of knight, the esteem of his peers, acknowledgement by his brothers, and the honor, which is more enviable than all worldly glory, to be among Elias' disciples.

Panel 4 --- Closed by its narrow lid, with a fat albeit split belly, a common clay pot fills with its plebian and cracked majesty the surface of this panel. Its inscription states that the vase of which we see the image, must open by itself and manifest by its destruction the completion of that which it holds:

.INTVS.SOLA.FIENT.MANIFESTA.RVINA.

Only the inside makes the ruin manifest.

Among so many diverse figures, so many emblems with which it fraternizes, our subject seems to be all the more original because its symbolism relates to the dry path, also called the Work of Saturn, as rarely translated into iconography as it is described in texts. Based upon the use of solid and crystallized materials, the brief way (*ars brevis*) only requires the help of a crucible and the application of high temperatures. This truth, Henckel ⁽¹⁾ had glimpsed, when he remarks that the "artist Elias, quoted by Helvetius, claims that the preparation of the philosophers' stone is accomplished, from start to finish, in four days time; and that he has indeed shown the stone still adhering to the sides of the crucible; it seems to me, the author continues, that it would not be so absurd to question whether that which the alchemists called long months, would not really be only days --- that is to say a very short period of time --- and whether there did not exist a method whereby the entire operation would consist in holding, for a very long time, the matters in a great degree of fluidity which could be obtained by a violent fire maintained by the action of bellows; but this method cannot be undertaken in all laboratories and perhaps not everyone would find it practical".

Nevertheless, contrary to the humid way, whose glass utensils allow for easy control and accurate observation, the dry way cannot enlighten the operator at any time in the process of the Work. So, although the time factor reduced to a minimum constitutes a serious advantage in the practice of the *ars brevis*, the necessity of high temperatures, on the other hand, presents the serious inconvenience of an absolute uncertainty as to the progress of the operation. Everything happens in the deepest mystery inside the crucible which is carefully sealed, buried at the core of the incandescent coals. It is therefore important to be very experienced and to know the fire's behavior and power well as one could not find in it, from the beginning to the end the least of indication. All the characteristic reactions of the humid way having been indicated among the classical authors, it is possible for the studious artist to acquire indications precise enough to allow him to undertake his long and difficult work. Here on the contrary, it is without any guide that the traveler, brave to the point of rashness, enters this arid and burnt desert. No road laid out, no clue, no landmark; nothing save the apparent inertia of the earth, of the rock, of the sand. The shiny kaleidoscope of the colored stages does not brighten up his uncertain walk; it is as a blind man that he continues his path, without any other certainty save that of his faith, without any other hope but his confidence in divine mercy.

Yet at the end of his path, the investigator will notice a sign, the only one whose appearance indicates success and confirms the perfection of the sulphur by the total fixation of mercury; this sign consists in the spontaneous bursting of the vessel. Once the time has elapsed, by laterally uncovering a part of its side, we notice, when the experiment has succeeded, one or more lines of a dazzling clarity, clearly visible on the less brilliant background of the envelope. These are the cracks revealing the happy birth of the young king. Just like at the end of incubation the hen's egg breaks under the effort of the chick, similarly the shell of our egg breaks as soon as the sulphur is produced. There is, among these results, an evident analogy in spite of the different causes, for in the mineral Work, the breaking of the crucible can logically be attributed only to a chemical action, unfortunately impossible to conceive or explain. Let us note however that the rather well known fact often occurs under the influence of certain combination of lesser interest. Thus, for example, while leaving aside, after having cleansed them well, new crucibles which have only been used once, for the fusion of metallic glass, the production of hepar sulphuris, or diaphoretic antimony, they are found cracked after a few days without one being able to explain the obscure reason of this late phenomenon. The considerable spacing of their bulges shows that the fracture seems to occur by the push of an expansive force acting from the center towards the periphery at room temperature and long after the actual use of these vessels.

Finally, let us also point out the remarkable match which exists between the motif of Dampierre and that of Bourges (Hotel Lallemand, in the ceiling of the chapel). Among the hermetic panels of the latter, one can also see an earthen pot tilted, whose opening, bell-mouthed and rather wide, is enclosed with a parchment's membrane tied on the edges. Its belly with holes in it lets beautiful macles of different sizes escape from it. The indication of the crystalline form of the sulphur obtained by the dry way is thus very clear and confirms by its added details, the esoteric quality of our bas-relief.

Panel 5 --- A celestial steel-clad hand brandishes the sword and the spatula. On the phylactery one can read these Latin words:

.PERCVTIAM.ET.SANABO.

I shall wound and I shall heal.

Jesus said the same thing: "I shall kill and I shall resuscitate". An esoteric thought of the utmost importance in the performance of the Magistry. "It is the first key", declares Limojon Saint-Didier ⁽²⁾, "the one that opens the dark prisons in which the sulphur is imprisoned, it is the one which knows how to extract the seed from the body and which forms the stone of the philosophers by the conjunction of the male with the female, of the spirit with the body, of the sulphur with the mercury. Hermes obviously demonstrated the operation of this first key by these words: '*De cavernis metallorum occultus est, qui lapis est venerabilis, colore splendidus, mens sublimes et mare patens*'" ⁽³⁾.

The cabalistic artifice under which our Adept has hidden the technique that Limojon means to teach us, consists in the choice of a double instrument represented on our panel. The sword that wounds, the spatula used to apply the healing balm are in truth but one and the same agent endowed with the twofold power of killing and resurrecting, of mortifying and of regenerating, of destroying and of organizing. Spatula in Greek is [*390-1] (*spate*), and this word also means glaive, sword and has its root in another Greek word [*390-2] (*spao*), to pull out, to root out, to extract. Therefore we indeed have here the exact indication of the hermetic meaning given by the spatula and by the sword. From then on, the investigator in possession

of the solvent, the sole factor susceptible of having an action on the bodies, of destroying them and of extracting the seed from them, will only need to look for the metallic subject which will seem to be the most appropriate to fulfill his task. And so the dissolved and pulverized metal, "broken to pieces", will yield to him this fixed and pure seed, the spirit which it bears within itself, the brilliant gem decked with magnificent colors, the first manifestation of the stone of the sages. Phoebus nascent, and the effective father of the Great Elixir. In an allegorical dialogue between a monster withdrawn at the bottom of a dark cavern, equipped with "seven horns filled with water" and the alchemist-errant plying the good-natured sphinx with questions. Jacques Tesson ⁽⁴⁾, has this mythical representative of the seven vulgar metals speak in these terms: "You must understand, says the sphinx, that I have come down from the celestial regions, and that I have fallen down here in these caves of the earth, where I have nourished myself for a while, but that I do not desire anything more than to return there and that the means to do this is that you kill me, and then that you resuscitate me, and with the instrument with which you kill me, you shall also resuscitate me. For as the white dove says, whoever has killed me will make me live again".

We could make an interesting remark about the means or instrument expressly represented by the arm-guard the celestial arm is equipped with, because no detail should be neglected in a study of this type, but we deem it is appropriate not to say everything and would prefer to leave it to whoever will want to trouble himself to decipher this additional hieroglyph. The alchemical science is not taught; everyone must learn it by himself, not in a speculative way, but indeed with the help of a persevering work, by multiplying trials and errors, so as to always submit the products of thinking to the control of experience. Whoever fears this manual labor, the heat of the furnaces, the dust of coal, the danger of unknown reactions, and the wakefulness of long vigils, will never know anything.

Panel 6 --- An ivy plant is represented coiled around a trunk of a dead tree whose branches have all been cut by human hands. The inscription which completes this bas-relief bears the words:

.INIMICA.AMICITIA.

The Enemy Friendship.

The anonymous author of the *Ancienne Gurre des Chevaliers (Ancient War of the Knights)* in a dialogue between the stone, the gold and the mercury has gold say that the stone is a worm filled with venom and accuses it of being the enemy of man and of metals. Nothing is more true; so much so that others reproach our subject to contain a frightful poison whose very odor, they insist, would suffice to cause death. Yet it is from this toxic mineral that the universal medicine is made, which no human illness can resist, no matter how incurable it is thought to be. But that which gives it all its value and makes it infinitely precious in the eyes of the sage is the admirable virtue it possesses, of revivifying metals which have been reduced and molten and of losing its poisonous properties by granting them its own activity. And so does it appear as the instrument of resurrection, and of redemption of the metallic bodies, dead by the violence of a reducing fire, the reason for which it bears in its coat of arms, the sign of the Redeemer, the cross.

By what we have just said the reader will have understood that the stone, that is to say our mineral subject, is represented on the present motif by the ivy, a perennial plant with a strong, nauseating odor, while the metal's representative is the inert and mutilated tree. For here we are not looking at a dry tree simply devoid of foliage and reduced to its skeleton: it would

then express for the hermeticist, the sulphur in its igneous dryness; on the contrary, it is a trunk, willfully mutilated which the saw has amputated of its major branches. The Greek verb [*392-1] (*prio*), meaning both to saw off, to cut with a saw, and to grasp, to squeeze, to strongly tie is the same word. Our tree being at the same time, sawed and grasped, we may think that the creator of these images wished to clearly indicate the metal and the dissolving action exercised upon it. The ivy, embracing the trunk as if to strangle it, very well construes the dissolution of the prepared subject as being full of vigor and vitality; but this dissolution instead of being ardent, effervescent, and quick seems slow, difficult, always imperfect. It is because the metal, although entirely attacked, is only partly solubilized; thus it is recommended to frequently reiterate the effusion of water on the body to extract from it the sulphur or seed "which constitutes all the energy of our stone". The metallic sulphur receives life from its very enemy as amends for its enmity and its hate. This operation, which the sages have called reincrudation or return to the primitive state, has above all for object the acquisition of sulphur and its revivification by the initial mercury. This return to the original matter of the treated metal should therefore not be taken literally since the greater part of the body, made up of coarse heterogeneous, sterile, or mortified elements is no longer susceptible to regeneration. Be that as it may, it is enough for the artist to obtain this sulphur principle, separated from the open and revivified metal, owing to the incisive power of our first mercury. With this new body, where friendship and harmony replace aversion --- for the respective virtues and properties of the two contrary natures are melted in, and merge within it --- he can hope to obtain first the philosophical mercury by the mediation of this essential agent, and then the Elixir, the object of his secret desires.

Panel 7 --- When Lois Audiat recognizes the face of God the Father, we simply see that of a centaur, which a streamer, bearing the symbol of the Senate and the people of Rome, has half hidden, The whole thing decorates a flag, the staff of which is solidly planted in the earth.

It is therefore a Roman ensign and we can conclude that the ground on which it floats is itself Roman. Further, the letters .S.P.Q.R., the abbreviation for Senatus Populusque Romanus ⁽⁵⁾ usually accompany the eagles and form with the cross the coat of arms of the Eternal City,

This ensign, placed on purpose to indicate a Roman earth, leads us to believe that Dampierre's philosopher was not ignorant of the symbolism specific to Basil Valentine, Senior Zadith, Mynsicht, etc. For these authors called Roman earth and Roman vitriol the earthly substance which provides our solvent, and without which it would be impossible to reduce metals into a mercurial water or, of you prefer, into a philosophical vitriol, According to Valmont de Bomare ⁽⁶⁾, "Roman vitriol, also called Vitriol of the Adepts, is not green copperas (ferrous sulfate), but a double vitriolic salt of iron and copper". Chambon agrees and gives as an equivalent the vitriol of Salzburg which is also a cupro-ferric sulfate. The Greeks called it [*393-1] (*soru*), and the Hellenic mineralogists describe it as being a salt, of a strong and unpleasant odor, which, when crushed, became black and took on a spongy and greasy appearance.

In his *Testamentum (Last Will and Testament)*, Basil Valentine points out the excellent properties and the rare virtues of vitriol, but the truthfulness of his words can only be recognized if one knows beforehand of which body he means to speak. "The vitriol is a noteworthy and important mineral to which none other in nature could be compared and this because vitriol familiarizes itself with all metals more than any other thing; it very closely related to them since from all metals one can make a vitriol or crystal; for vitriol and crystal are not recognized except for one and the same thing. It is why I did not want to idly defer its merit as reason requires it, since vitriol is preferable to other minerals and since the first rank

after metals must be given to it, For, although metals and minerals are gifted with great virtues, vitriol is, nevertheless, the only one sufficient to extract and make the blessed stone, which no other in the world could accomplish in its imitation". Later our Adept resumes the same topic by providing details on the double nature of Roman Vitriol: "I say here about this that you must imprint very clearly this argument in thy spirit and that you entirely bare your thoughts on the metallic vitriol, and that you remember that I have entrusted this knowledge to you that one can from Mars and Venus make a magnificent vitriol in which the three principles can be found which often serve to the birthing and production of our stone".

Let us consider a rather important remark made by Henckel ⁽⁷⁾ and regarding vitriol. "Among all the names given to vitriol", says this author, "not one has any connection to iron; it is always called chalcantum, chalcitis, cuperosa, or cupri rosa, etc. And it is not only the Greeks and the Romans that deprived iron of the role it takes in the vitriol; the same has been done in Germany. And still today to all the vitriols in general and especially to that containing the most iron, the name of *KupferWasser* (copper water) is given or, which amounts to the same thing, that of copperas".

Panel 8 --- The subject of this bas-relief is rather singular; a young gladiator is seen here, almost a child, persisting in carving, with great thrusts of the sword, a beehive filled with honey combs and whose lid he has taken off. Two words make up the inscription:

.MELITVS.GIADIVS.

The honeyed sword.

This bizarre act of an impetuous youth carried away, giving battle to bees just as Don Quixote did to mills, is but the symbolic translation of our first work, an original variant of the well known and so often exploited hermetic theme of the striking of the rock. We know that after their departure from Egypt, the children of Israel had to encamp at Rephidim (Ex. 17:1, Num. 33:14), "and there was no water for the people to drink". Following the Lord's advice (Ex. 17:6), Moses smote the rock in Horeb three times with his rod and water came out of the dry stone. Mythology also offers us a few examples of the same prodigy. Callimachus (*Hymn to Jupiter*, 31) says of the Goddess Rhea, that as she struck the Arcadian Mountain with her scepter, it opened in two and water came out of it in abundance. Apollonius of Alexandria (*The Argonautica*, 1146) recounts the miracle of Mount Dindymus and asserts that the rock had never before produced the smallest springs. Pausanias attributes a similar deed to Atalanta, who, in order to quench her thirst, caused a spring to well up by striking a rock in the neighborhood of Cyphanta, in Laconia, with her javelin.

In our bas-relief, the gladiator takes the place of the alchemist, represented elsewhere with the features of Hercules, --- hero of the 12 symbolic labors --- or yet with the appearance of a knight armed to the teeth, as can be seen on the portal of Notre-Dame de Paris. The youthfulness of the character expresses this simplicity which has to be abided by throughout the entire work process by imitating and following Nature's example very closely. On the other hand, we must believe that if the Adept of Dampierre gives his preference to gladiators, it is without doubt to indicate that the artist must work or fight alone against the matter. The Greek [*395-1] (*monomachos*), which means gladiator, is composed of two words, [*305-2] (*monos*), alone, and [*395-3] (*machomai*), to fight. As for the beehive, it owes the privilege of representing the stone to the cabalistic artifice which makes the French word ruche (beehive) derive from the French word roche (rock) by permutation of the vowels. The philosophical subject, our first stone --- in Greek [*395-4] (*petra*) --- appears clearly under the image of the

beehive or rock because [*395-5] (*petra*), also means rock, a word used by the sages to signify the Hermetic subject.

In addition, our swordsman by soundly thrashing the emblematic beehive and by randomly cutting its honey combs makes an amorphous, heterogeneous mass out of it, of wax, propolis, and honey, an incoherent magma, a true *meli-melo* (muddle), to use the language of the gods, from which honey is flowing to the point of covering his sword, substituted for Moses' staff. This then, the second chaos, the result of the primal clash which we cabalistically call meli-melo, because it contains honey ([*395-6] --- *meli*), the viscous and glutinous water of metals, that is always ready to flow ([*395-7] --- *mello*). The masters of the Art state that the entire work is a labor of Hercules and that, first, one must strike the stone, rock, or beehive, our first matter, with the magic sword of the secret fire so as to cause the flowing of this precious water which is enclosed within. For the subject of the sages is but a congealed water, henceforth it received the name of Pegasus (from [*395-8] --- *pegas*, rock, ice, congealed water, or hard and dry earth), and the fable teaches us that Pegasus, among other deeds, caused the fountain of Hippocrene to flow by kicking it. The word [*395-9], *Pegasus* has for a root [*395-10] (*pege*), source so that the winged steed of the poets is merged with the hermetic fountain of which it possesses the essential qualities: the mobility of spring waters and the volatility of spirits.

As an emblem of the first matter, the beehive can often be seen in decorations that borrow their elements from the science of Hermes. We have seen it on the ceiling of the Hotel Lallemand and among the panels of the alchemical stone of Winterthur. It also occupies one of the squares of the Game of the Goose ⁽⁸⁾, a popular representation of the labyrinth of the secret Art and collection of the main hieroglyphs of the Great Work.

Panel 9 --- The sun, piercing the clouds, darting its rays towards a meadow pipit's nest ⁽⁹⁾ that contains a small egg placed on a grass-covered knoll. The phylactery which gives this bas-relief its meaning bears the inscription:

.NEC.TE.NEC.SINE.TE.

Not thee, but nothing without thee.

It is an allusion to the Sun, the Father of the Stone, following in this belief Hermes, and the many hermetic philosophers. The symbolic heavenly body represented in its radiant splendor, holds the place of the metallic sun, or sulphur which many artists have believed to be natural gold. It is a serious mistake; all the less excusable because all other authors clearly establish the difference existing between the fold of the sages and the precious metal. It is indeed of the sulphur of metals that the masters speak when they describe the manner of extracting and of preparing this first agent, which furthermore offers no physico-chemical resemblance to common gold. And it is also this sulphur joined to mercury which contributes to the generation of our egg by giving it its vegetative faculty. This real father of the stone is therefore independent from it since the stone comes from it, hence the first part of the inscription: *nec te* (not you), and since it is impossible to obtain anything without the help of sulphur, the second proposition is also justified: *nec sine te* (nothing without you). And what we say of sulphur is true of mercury. So that the egg, the manifestation of the new metallic form emanated from the mercurial principle, while it owes its substance to mercury or the hermetic Moon, draws its vitality and its potential growth from sulphur, or the Sun of the sages.

To sum it up, it is philosophically accurate to assert that the metals are composed of sulphur and mercury as Bernard Trevisan teaches us: that the stone, though made of the same principles, does not give birth to a metal; that finally the sulphur and mercury, seen as separate entities, are the only parents of the stone, but cannot be mistaken for it. We will allow ourselves to draw the reader's attention to the fact that the philosophical coction of the Rebis yields a sulphur, and not an irreducible compound of its components, and that this sulphur, by completely assimilating the mercury, takes on special properties, which tend to estrange it from the metallic species. And this constancy of result is the basis for the technique of multiplication and growth because the new sulphur remains always capable of absorbing a determined and proportional quantity of mercury.

(1) J.F. Henckel: *Traite de l'Appropriation (Treatise on Appropriation)* in *Pyritologie ou Histoire Naturelle de la Pyrite (Pyritology or Natural History of Pyrites)*; Paris, J.-T. Herissant, 1760, p. 370, para. 416.

(2) *Le Triomphe Hermetique. Lettre aux Vrais Disciples d'Hermes (The Hermetical Triumph. A Letter to the True Disciples of Hermes)*, op. cit., p. 127.

(3) "The sulphur is hidden within the greatest depths of metals, it is the venerable stone of bright color and elevated soul, and a vast sea".

(4) Jacques Tesson: *Le Lyon V€erd ou l'Oeuvre des Sages (The Green Lion or the Work of the Sages)*. First Treatise, Ms. cit.

(5) Roman Senate and People.

(6) Valmont de Bomare: *Mineralogie ou Nouvelle Exposition du Regne Mineral (Mineralogy or New Treatise on the Mineral Kingdom)*; Paris, Vincent, 1774.

(7) J.F. Henckel: *Pyritologie (Pyritology)*, ch. 7, p. 184, op. cit.

(8) Translator's Note: The "jeu de l'oie" (Game of the Goose --- which also sounds like Game of the Law in French) could be compared to "snakes and ladders". There is a spiral drawn on a board (a spiral resembling the labyrinth on the floor of the Cathedral of Chartres) with 63 boxes. The idea is to go to the center of the spiral.

(9) The meadow pipit (*Anthus Pratensis*) is a small bird related to the skylark. It nests in the grass. The Greeks call it *Anthos*, but this word has another meaning of a clearly esoteric nature. *Anthos* also designates the *flower* and the *most perfect*, the most distinguished parts of a thing; it is also the efflorescence, the froth or foam of solutions of which the lighter parts rise to the surface and crystallize. This is enough to provide a clear idea of the birth of the little bird whose sole egg must engender our Phoenix.

THE CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE X

Seventh Series (Plate XXXII)

Panel 1 --- The tables of the hermetic law on which a French sentence can be read, but so singularly presented that M. Louis Audiat could not discover its meaning:

.EN.RIEN.GIST.TOVT.

Within nothing, everything lies.

A primordial motto which the ancient philosophers loved to repeat and by which they meant the absence of value, the commonness, the extreme abundance of the basic matter from which they drew everything they needed. "Then you will find the All-in-All, which is the styptic force of all metals and minerals derived from salt and sulphur, and twice born of Mercury", writes Basil Valentine in the book of the *Twelve Keys*.

Thus does true wisdom teach us to not judge things according to their price, the pleasure received from them, or the beauty of their appearance. It leads us to value in man personal merit rather than the outer or the social conditions, and in bodies the spiritual quality they keep hidden within them. To the eyes of the wise, iron, this pariah of human industry, is incomparably more noble than gold, and gold more despicable than lead; for this bright light, this ardent, active, and pure water that common metals, minerals, and stones have preserved, is lacking only in gold. This sovereign to which so many people pay homage, for which so many consciences demean themselves in the hope of obtaining its favors, has of wealth and preciousness only the clothes. A sumptuously dressed king, the gold is but an inert, albeit magnificent, body, a brilliant corpse compared to copper, iron, or lead. This usurper, that an ignorant and greedy crowd raises to the rank of god, cannot even claim to belong to the old and powerful family of metals; stripped of its coat, it then reveals the baseness of its origin and appears to us as a simple metallic resin, dense, fixed, and fusible, a triple quality which renders it obviously improper to the realization of our objective. Thus we can see how vain it would be to work on gold, for whoever has nothing can evidently give nothing. It is therefore to the raw and vile stone that we must address ourselves without repugnance for its miserable appearance, its disgusting odor, its black coloration, its sordid rags. For these same rather unattractive characteristics allow us to recognize it and caused people to always look at it as the primitive substance, issued from the original chaos and that God, during the Creation and organization of the universe, would have reserved for his servants and his chosen ones. Drawn from the Void, it bears its imprint and its name: Nothing. But the philosophers have discovered that in its elementary and disorganized nature, consisting all of darkness and of light, of bad and of good, assembled in the worst of confusion, this Nothing contained All they could hope for.

Panel 2 --- The capital letter H surmounted by a crown that M. Louis Audiat presents as being the heraldic signature of the king of France, Henry II, offers today only a partly hammered out inscription, but which used to read:

.IN.TE.OMNIS.DOMINATA.RECVMBIT.

In you rests all might.



CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE-SUR-BOUTONNE
 Panels of the Upper Gallery - Seventh Series

We had previously the opportunity of mentioning that the letter H, or at least the graphic character linked to it, had been chosen by the philosophers to designate the spirit, the universal soul of things, or the active and almighty principle which is recognized to be, in nature, in perpetual motion and in active vibration. It is in the shape of the letter H that the builders of the Middle Ages built the facades of the cathedrals, the temples glorifying the divine spirit, the magnificent interpreters of the aspirations of the human soul in its rising towards the Creator. This character corresponds to eta (H), seventh letter of the Greek alphabet, the initial of the solar word, the dwelling of the spirit, the heavenly dispenser of light: [*402-1] (*Helios*) the sun. It is also the head of the prophet Elijah --- in Greek [*404-2] (*Helias*) solar --- who, claim the Scriptures, has ascended to the heavens as a pure spirit, in a chariot of light and fire. It is also the center and heart of one of the monograms of Christ: HIS, abbreviation of *Iesus Hominum Salvator*, Jesus, Savior of Men. It is also the sign used by the medieval Freemasons to designate the two columns of Solomon's temple at the feet of which the workmen received their salary: Jachin and Boaz, columns of which the towers of the metropolitan churches are but a free, albeit bold and powerful, translation. It is finally the sign of the first rung of the ladder of the sages, scala philosophorum, of the acquired knowledge of the hermetic agent, the mysterious promoter of the transformations of the mineral nature and that of the newly gained secret of the lost word. This agent was once upon a time called among Adepts by the name of magnet or the attractive. The body charged with this magnet was also called Magnesia, and it is it, this body, that served as an intermediary between the sky and the earth, feeding on astral influences or celestial dynamism which it transmitted to the passive substance, by attracting them in the manner of a true magnet. De Cyrano Bergerac ⁽¹⁾ in one of his allegorical tales this speaks of the magnesian spirit, about which he seems quite well informed as well as about its preparation and about its usage.

"You have not forgot my name [I believe], writes our author, [it is Helias], seeing it is not long since I told it to you. You shall know then, that I lived in your world with Elyseus, a jew like me], on the agreeable Banks [of the Jordan]; where amongst my Books, I lead a Life pleasant enough, not to be lamented, though it slipt away fast enough. In the mean while, the more I encreased in [the light of Knowledge, the more [grew the knowledge of] my Ignorance. Our learned [Priests never reminded me] of the famous [Adam], but the thoughts of his perfect Philosophy [that he had possessed] made me to Sigh. I was despairing of being able to attain to it, when one day, [after having sacrificed myself for the penance of the weakness of my mortal being, I fell asleep and the Angel of the Lord appeared to me in a dream; as soon as I awoke, I did not fail but to work according to the directions he had given me]. I took a piece of Lode-Stone about two Foot square, which I put into a Furnace; and then after it was well purged, precipitated and dissolved, I drew the calcined Attractive [from it, I calcined the whole Elixir], and reduced it to the size if an ordinary [ball].

"After these preparation, I got a very light Medicine of Iron made, [and after a few months, all my equipment having been completed, I stepped in my laborious carriage. You may ask me what is the use of all this equipment. Know that the Angel told me in a dream that if I wanted to acquire the perfect science as I so desired, that I should ascend to the World of the moon where I would find Adam's Paradise, the Tree of Knowledge, because as soon as I should taste its fruit, my soul would be enlightened of all the truths as a creature could know. This is therefore the trip for which I had built my chariot. Finally I climbed in it,] and when I was well [and firmly] seated in my place, I threw this Magnetic [ball], as high as I could, up into the Air. Now the Iron Machine, which I had purposely made more massive in the middle than at the ends, was presently elevated, and in a just Pose; because the middle received the greatest force of Attraction. So then as I arrived at the place, whither my Lode-Stone had

attracted me, and as soon as I had jumped up to there, I threw up my Bowl in the Air over me again...

"The truth is, it was a very surprising Spectacle to behold; for the Steel of that flying House, which I had very carefully Polished, reflected on all sides the light of the Sun, with so great life and luster, that I thought myself to be [carried away on a chariot of fire]. When I reflected since upon this Miracle, I imagined that I could not have vanquished by occult virtues of a simple natural body the vigilance of a Seraphim that God has ordained for the guard of the paradise. But because He is sometimes pleased to use secondary causes I believe that He had inspired me with this means to enter into it just as He was kind enough to use the rib of Adam to make a woman out of him; although he could have formed her out of earth just as well as He did with him".

As for the crown which completes the important sign we are studying, it is not that of the king of France, Henry II, but rather the royal crown of the chosen ones. That crown is seen to adorn the head of the Redeemer on the crucifix of the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries, in particular in Amiens (a Byzantine Christ called "Sainte-Sauve") and in Notre-Dame de Treves (on the top of the portal). The horseman of the Apocalypse (Rev. 6:1), seated on a white horse, an emblem of purity, receives as the distinctive attributes of his high virtues a bow and a crown, gifts of the Holy Ghost. Our crown --- the initiates know what we speak of --- is precisely the favorite dwelling place of the spirit. It is a worthless substance, as we mentioned, barely materialized, but which contains an abundance of the latter. And this is what the philosophers from Antiquity have fixed in their corona radiata (radiant crown), ornamented with protruding rays only attributed to God, or to deified heroes. So shall we explain that this matter, the vehicle of the mineral light, reveals itself, thanks to the radiant signature of the spirit, as the promised land reserved for the chosen ones of Sapience.

Panel 3 --- It is an ancient and often used symbol that we find in this place: a dolphin curled around the arm of a sea anchor. The Latin epigraph which serves as its ensign gives the reason for it:

.SIC.TRISTIS.AVRA.RESEDIT.

Thus does this terrible storm subside.

We had several times the opportunity to note the important role filled by the fish on the alchemical scene. Under the name of dolphin, echeneis, or remora, it characterizes the humid and cold principle of the Work which is our mercury, and which gradually coagulates in contact with and by the effect of the sulphur, an agent of desiccation and of fixity. The latter is represented here by the sea anchor, the stabilizing organ of vessels, for which it provides a point of resistance and support against the efforts of the waves. The long operation which permits completion, the progressive turning into a paste, and the final fixing of the mercury offers a great analogy with sea crossings, and the tempests which greet them. This rather rough and swelling sea represents, on a smaller scale, the constant and regular boilings of the hermetic compost. The bubbles burst on the surface and constantly succeed each other; heavy vapors fill the atmosphere of the vessel, and condense into droplets trickling down on the effervescent mass. Everything contributes to give the spectacle of a small scale storm. Raised up from all sides, thrown around by the winds, the ark nevertheless floats under torrential rains. Asteria prepares to form Delos, the hospitable country that saved Latona's children. The dolphin swims on the surface of the impetuous waters and this agitation lasts until the remora, the invisible host of the deep sea, finally puts to rest, as would a powerful anchor, the ship

gone adrift. Calmness then reappears, the air is purified, the water recedes, vapors are reabsorbed. A film covers the entire surface and, thickening and firming day by day, marks the end of the flood, the time for the ark's landing, the birth of Diana and of Apollo, the triumph of earth over water, of the dry over the wet, and the era of the new Phoenix. In the midst of the general upheaval and the clash of the elements is this permanent peace acquired, this harmony resulting from the perfect equilibrium of the principles symbolized by the fish fixed on the anchor: sic tristis aura resedit.

This phenomenon of absorption and coagulation of the mercury by a much smaller proportion of sulphur seems to be the first cause for the fable of the remora, the little fish to which popular imagination and hermetic tradition attributed the capability of stopping the largest of ships in their progress. Further, here is, in an allegorical and very instructive discourse, what the philosopher Rene Francois ⁽²⁾ says about it: "The Emperor Caligula thought one day to go mad with impatience, upon returning to Rome with a powerful naval force. All the well-armed, well-spurred, superb ships sailed at leisure, the wind from the rear filled all the sails, the waves and the sky seemed to be on Caligula's side, helping his plan, and, as everything seemed to be for the best, the commanding imperial galley stopped short. The other ships were flying on the waters. The emperor got angry, the pilot blew his whistle louder, four hundred strokes of galley and galiots who were on the oars, five on each bench, became sweaty by dint of pushing on the oars; the wind became stronger, the sea angry from this affront, everyone wondered about this miracle, when the emperor came to imagine that some sea monster was stopping him in this place. And so, many dove into the water, and swam under the surface, going all around this floating castle; they finally found a mean little fish about half a foot long, which had attached itself to the tiller, taking the time to stop the very ship that was taming the universe. It seemed as if it wanted to mock the emperor of the human race who fidgeted with so much impatience with his hordes of soldiers and his iron thunderbolts, which made him lord of the earth. Here, it is said in its fish language, is a new Hannibal at the gates of Rome, who is detained in a floating prison, Rome and its emperor; Rome the princess will lead on earth the captive king in triumph, and I will lead in marine triumph, by the provinces of the ocean, the Prince of the Universe. Caesar will be king of men, and I will be the Caesar of Caesars; all the power of Rome is now my slave and can spend itself to the last drop, for as long as I want, I will hold it in this royal jail. By playing and joining myself to this galleon, I will do more in one moment than they did in 800 years, slaying the human race and depopulating the world. Poor emperor! How wide you are of the mark with all of your 150 millions of income and 300,000,000 men in your pay; an uncouth little fish has made you its slave! Even if the sea gets upset, even if the wind becomes furious, even if everyone becomes a galley slave and all the trees become oars, they could not go forward by one foot without my sea pass and my leave. Here is the true Archimedes of the fish, for it alone stops the entire world; here is the animated magnet which imprisons all the iron and weapons of the foremost Monarchy of the world; I do not know who calls Rome the Golden Anchor of the human race, but this dish is the anchor of anchors --- O marvel of God! This little fish shames not only the Roman greatness, but also Aristotle who loses credibility here and philosophy which goes bankrupt, for they find no reason for this strength, that a mouth without teeth could top a ship pushed by the four elements, and stops it in the midst of the strongest of storms. Pliny says that all of nature is hidden and stands sentry and dwells garrisoned in the smallest of creatures; I believe it, and I for one think that this little fish is flying the flag of Nature and of all its soldiers; it is Nature which nabs and stops these galleys; it is it which bridles, however without any other bridle than the snout of a little fish, that which cannot be bridled --- Alas! Why do we not bring down the horns of our vain arrogance, with such a holy consideration; for if God making games can, with a little buccaneer of the sea and the pirate of nature, arrest and stop all of our plans, which are flying with full sails

from one pile to the other, to what point will he reduce our affairs if he used all his might? If out of nothing he does everything and out of a fish or out of a little nothing, swimming and acting like a fish, he can overwhelm our hopes, alas! Whenever he will use all of his might and all the hosts of his justice, well, where will we be then?"

Panel 4 --- Near the tree with the golden fruit, a robust and stout dragon exercises his vigilance at the entrance of the Garden of the Hesperides. The phylactery specific to the topic bears this engraved inscription:

.AB.INSOMNI.NON.CVSTODITA.DRACONE.

Beside the dragon, which is watching, things are not guarded.

The myth of the dragon in charge of the surveillance of the famous orchard and of the legendary Golden Fleece is known well enough to prevent us the trouble of repeating it. It suffices to point out that the dragon is chosen as the hieroglyphic representative of the crude mineral matter with which we must begin the Work. That is to indicate its significance, the care that we must bring to the study of the outer signs and of the qualities likely to make its identification possible, to help us recognize and distinguish the hermetic subject among the many minerals which nature places at our disposal.

In charge of guarding the marvelous field, where philosophers go and get their treasures, the dragon is known to never sleep. His fiery eyes remain constantly open. He knows neither rest nor weariness and could not overcome the insomnia which characterizes it and grants it its true *raison d'être*. This is actually what the Greek name it bears expresses. [*408-1] (*Drakon*) has for root [*408-2] (*derchomai*) to look and see, and by extension to live, a word close to [*408-3] (*derchenes*) who sleeps with open eyes. Primitive language reveals through the cloak of symbols, the idea of an intense activity, of a perpetual and latent vitality enclosed in the mineral body. Mythologists name our dragon Ladon, a word whose assonance comes close to Laton and which can be assimilated to the Greek [*408-4] (*Leto*) to be hidden, unknown, ignored like the matter of the philosophers.

The dragon's general appearance, its well-known ugliness, its ferocity, and its unusual vital power correspond exactly to the external characteristics, properties and capabilities of this subject. The special crystallization of the latter finds itself clearly indicated by the scaly skin of the dragon. So are its colors, for the matter is black, spotted red or yellow as is the dragon, which is its likeness. As for the volatile quality of our mineral, we see it translated by the membranous wings with which the monster is equipped. And because it is said that it vomits fire and smoke when attacked and that its body ends in a snakelike tail, poets, for these reasons, had him be born of Typhon and Echidna. The Greek [*408-5] (*Tuphaon*) a poetic term for [*408-6] (*Tuphon*) or [*408-7] (*Tuphos*) --- the Egyptian Typhon --- means to fill with smoke, to light, to set aflame. [*408-8] (*Echidna*) is nothing else than the viper. Hence we can conclude that what the dragon takes after from Typhon is its hot, ardent, and sulphurous nature while it owes to its mother its cold and wet complexion with the characteristic form of the ophidians.

While the philosophers have always hidden the common name of their matter under an infinity of qualifiers, they were, on the other hand, often quite prolix as far as describing its form, its virtues, and sometimes even its preparation. By common consent, they assert that the artist must hope to discover nothing, nor produce anything outside of the subject because it is the only body in nature capable of providing him with the essential elements. To the exclusion

of other minerals and other metals, it preserves the principles necessary to the elaboration of the Great Work. By its monstrous albeit expressive figuration, this primitive subject appears clearly as the guardian and the unique dispenser of the hermetic fruits. It is their depository, their vigilant preserver, and our Adept speaks wisely when he teaches us that apart from this solitary being, philosophical things are guarded by no one, since we might look in vain for them elsewhere. And about this first body, fragment of the original chaos and common mercury of the philosophers, Geber exclaimed: "Blessed be the Almighty, who created our mercury and who gave it a nature to which nothing resists; for, without it, the alchemists' painstaking efforts would be in vain, all their labor would become useless".

But, asks another Adept ⁽³⁾, "Where then is this aurific mercury which, resolved into salt and sulphur, becomes the humid radical of metals, and their animated see? It is imprisoned in a jail so strong that nature itself could not pull it out, if the industrious art did not facilitate the means for it".

Panel 5 --- A swan majestically poised on the calm water of a pond, has its neck pierced by an arrow. And it is its ultimate lament that the epigraph of this small, so agreeably executed, subject translates for us:

.PROPRIIS.PEREO.PENNIS.

I die by my own feathers

The bird indeed provided one of the matters of the weapon that will be used to kill it; the feathers of the arrow assuring its direction, makes it accurate and the feathers of the swan, fulfilling the same purpose thus contribute to its undoing. This beautiful bird whose wings are symbolic of volatility, and whose snowy whiteness is the expression of purity, possesses the two essential qualities of the initial mercury or our dissolving water. We know that it must be vanquished by the sulphur --- issuing from its own substance which it has itself generated --- so as to obtain after its death this partly fixed, partly volatile philosophical mercury, which the subsequent maturation will raise to the degree of perfection of the Great Elixir. All the authors teach that the living must be killed if the dead is to resurrected; this is why the good artist will not hesitate to sacrifice the bird of Hermes and to initiate the mutation of its mercurial properties into sulphurous qualities since any transformation remains subject to a preliminary decomposition and cannot be completed without it.

Basil Valentine states that "the twofold fiery man must be fed a snowy swan" and he adds "then the swan roasted will become food for the King". No philosopher, to our knowledge, has lifted the veil which covers this mystery and we wonder whether it is advisable to comment upon such serious words. However, recalling the long years during which we ourselves remained stuck before this door, we think that it would be charitable to help the worker, who has arrived at this point, to get over the threshold. Let us therefore, give him a helping hand and disclose, within the permitted boundaries, what the greatest masters have believed prudent to hide.

It is obvious that Basil Valentine, by using the expression of the twofold fiery man, means to speak of a secondary principle resulting from the combination of two agents of hot and ardent disposition, consequently being of the nature of metallic sulphurs. Hence we can conclude that under the simple name of sulphur, the Adepts, at a given time in the progress of the work conceive two conceived bodies, of similar properties, but of different specificity, conventionally taken to be a single one. This being proposed, what would the substances

capable of yielding these two products be? Such a question has never received an answer. However, if we consider that the emblematic representatives of metals are figured by mythological deities, now masculine, now feminine; that they owe these particular attributions to the sulphurous qualities proven by experiment, the symbolism the fable will likely shed some light on these dark matters.

Everyone knows that iron and lead are placed under the rule of Aries and of Chronos, and that they receive their respective planetary influences from Mars and from Saturn; tin and gold, ruled by Zeus and Apollo, take up the vicissitudes of Jupiter and the Sun. But why do Aphrodite and Venus rule copper and silver, the subjects of Venus and of the Moon? Why does mercury owe its disposition to the messenger of Mount Olympus, the God Hermes, although it is deprived of sulphur and fulfills the functions reserved to the chemic-hermetic women? Must we accept these relationships as true and is there not, in the distribution of the metallic divinities and of their astral planetary correspondences a set, deliberate confusion? If we are able to be questioned on this point we would answer in the affirmative without hesitation. Experience categorically demonstrates that silver possesses a magnificent sulphur, as pure and bright as that of gold, yet without having its fixedness. Lead yields a mediocre product of a rather equal color, but less stable and quite impure. The sulphur of tin, flawless and bright, is white and would incite us to put this metal under a goddess' protection rather than a god's authority. Iron on the other hand, has a lot of fixed sulphur of a dark, dull, filthy and so imperfect red that in spite of its fire-proof quality, we would not really know what to do with it. And yet, with the exception of gold, we would vainly search in the other metals for a more luminous, more penetrating, and more manageable mercury. As for the sulphur of copper, Basil Valentine describes it rather accurately in the first book of his *Twelve Keys* ⁽⁴⁾: "Amatory Venus is clothed with abundant color, and her whole body is almost completely made of a tincture or color similar to the one of the Sun, which, because of its abundance, closely borders on red. But [since] her body is leprous and sick and affords no permanent substratum to the fixed tincture, [when the body perishes, the tincture perishes with it, unless it is joined to a fixed body, in which it could elect its seat and dwelling in a stable and permanent fashion]".

Having well understood what the famous Adept wanted to convey and having carefully examined the relationships existing between the metallic sulphurs and their respective symbols, one will have very little trouble in reestablishing the esoteric order in accordance with the Work. The enigma will be easy to decipher and the issue of the twofold sulphur will be easily solved.

Panel 6 --- Two horns of cornucopia intersect on mercury's caduceus. As epigraph, they bear this Latin maxim:

.VIRTVTI.FORTVNA.COES.

Wealth accompanies virtue.

Uncommon axiom of which the truth is questionable when applied to true merit --- where wealth quite seldom regards virtue --- that it would be appropriate to look elsewhere for its confirmation and its rule. Yet it is of the secret virtue of the philosophical mercury, represented here by the image of the caduceus, that the author of these symbols intends to speak. The horns of cornucopia translate the totality of material wealth that the possession of mercury insures to the good artists. By their intersecting as an X, they indicate the spiritual

quality of this noble and rare substance whose energy shines like a pure fire, at the center of the accurately sublimated body.

The caduceus, attributed to the god Mercury, should not give rise to the least ambiguity, as much in terms of its secret meaning as from the vantage point of its symbolic value. Hermes, the father of the hermetic science, is considered both as creator and as creature, master of philosophy and matter of the philosophers. His winged scepter bears the explanation of the enigma he proposes, and the revelation of the mystery hiding the compound of the compound, the masterpiece of nature and of art, under the common name of mercury of the sages.

Originally the caduceus was a mere stick, the primitive scepter of some sacred or legendary characters belonging more to tradition than to history, Moses, Atalanta, Cybele, Hermes use this instrument, endowed with a sort of magic power, in similar conditions, and generating equivalent results. The Greek [*412-1] (*rabdos*) is actually a stik, a wand or the staff of a javelin, a dart and Hermes' scepter. This word derives from [*412-2] (*passo*), which means to strike, to split, to destroy. Moses smites with this stick the dry rock which Atalanta, following Cybele's example, pierces with her javelin. Mercury separates and kills the two snakes engaged in a furious duel, by throwing on them the wand of the [*412-3] (*pterophoroi*) that is to say of the couriers and messengers, called wing bearers because they had, as distinctive mark of their duty, wings on their carp. Hermes' petasus therefore justified his function of messenger and mediator of the gods. The addition of snakes to the stick, completed by the hat ([*412-4] --- *petasos*) and the talaria ([*412-5] --- *tarsoi*), gave the caduceus its final form, with the hieroglyphic expression of the perfect mercury.

On the panel of Dampierre, the two snakes show dog-like heads, one of a dog, the other of a bitch, an image of the two contrary active and passive, fixed and volatile principles, put in contact with the mediator represented by the magic stick, our secret fire. Artephius named these principles Fog of Khorassan and Bitch of Armenia, and they are the very same serpents that Hercules choked in his crib as a child, the only agents whose assembling, fight and death, accomplished with the help of the philosophical fire, give birth to the live and animate hermetic mercury. And since this twofold mercury possesses double volatility, the wings of the petasus, opposite those of the talaria on the caduceus, serve to express these two reunited qualities in the clearest and most revealing fashion.

Panel 7 --- In this bas-relief, Cupid, a bow in one hand and an arrow in the other, is riding the chimera on a cluster of starry clouds. The phylactery which underlines this subject indicates that Eros is here the eternal master:

.AETERNVS.HIC.DOMINVS.

Nothing could be more true, and other panels have taught us the same. Eros, the mythological personification of concord and love, is par excellence, the lord, the eternal master of the Work. He alone can realize the agreement of enemies whom an unrelenting hate ceaselessly prompts to devour one another. He fulfills the peaceful duty of the priest who is seen to unite upon an engraving in Basil Valentine's *Twelve Keys* --- the hermetic king and queen. It is still he who, in the same book, darts an arrow towards a woman holding an enormous mattress filled with cloudy water.

Mythology teaches us that the Chimera bore three different heads on a lion body which ended as a snake tail: the head of a lion, another of a goat, and the third of a dragon. Of the constituting parts of the monster, two are predominant, the lion and the dragon, because they

bring to the whole one the head and the body, the other, the head and the tail. By analyzing the symbol in the order of the successive acquisitions, the first place belongs to the dragon which is always confused with the serpent; we know that the Greek used [*412-1] (*drachon*) for the dragon rather than for the snake. This is our initial matter, the very subject of the art, considered in its first being and in the state nature offers it to us. The lion comes next, and although it is the child if the subject of the sages, and of a decaying metal, it surpasses by far its own parents in vigor and quickly becomes sturdier than its father. Unworthy son of an old man and of a very young woman, it gives evidence since birth of an inconceivable aversion for its mother. Unsociable, ferocious, and aggressive, nothing could be expected from this violent and cruel heir if it were not, by means of a providential accident, brought back to more calm and balance. Encouraged by his mother Aphrodite, Eros, already unhappy with the particular character, let fly a bronze arrow and severely wounds it. Half paralyzed, it is then brought back to its mother who, to help this ungrateful son recover, nevertheless gives it of her own blood, even a part of her flesh, and dies after having saved it. "The mother", says the Turba Philosophorum, "always feels more pity for the child than the child for the mother". Out of this close and prolonged contact of the lion --- sulphur with the solvent --- dragon, a new being is formed in some way regenerated; with mixed qualities symbolically represented by the goat, or if you will, by the Chimera herself. The Greek word [*413-1] (*Chimera*) for Chimera, also means young goat, (cabalistically, [*413-2] --- *Chi-meter*). Now this young goat, which owes its excellence and its outstanding qualities to the timely intervention of Eros, is none other than the philosophical mercury, born from the union of the sulphur and mercury principles, which possesses all the required abilities to become the famous ram with the golden fleece, our Elixir and our Stone. And it is the entire order of the hermetic labor which is revealed by the ancient Chimera, and as Philalethes put it, this is also our entire philosophy.

The reader will hopefully excuse us from having used the allegory so as to clearly pinpoint the important points of the practice, but we have no other means and we follow in that way an old literary tradition. And if, in this tale, we silence the essential part, which by right falls to the little Cupid --- master of the Work and lord in this house --- it is only by obedience to the discipline of the Order and not to perjure ourselves. Besides, the perspicacious reader will find, deliberately disseminated in the pages of this book, complementary indications about the role of the mediator, of which we must not speak further here.

Panel 8 --- We find here a motif we already encountered elsewhere, particularly in Brittany. It is an ermine represented in a small enclosure, bordered by a circular hurdle, personal symbol of Queen Anne, wife of Charles III and of Louis XII. It is represented next to the emblematic porcupine of Louis XII, on the mantle of the great fireplace of the Lallemand mansion in Bourges. Its epigraph contains the same meaning and uses almost the same words as the famous motto of the Order of the Ermine: *Malo moro quam fedari*, I prefer death to blemish. This Order of Chivalry, founded first in 1381 by John V, Duke of Brittany, was to disappear in the 15th century. Later reinstated by the King of Naples, Ferdinand I, in the year 1483, the Order of the Ermine, having lost all hermetic characteristic, was only forming a more or less coherent association of aristocratic chivalry.

The inscription engraved on the banner of our panel bears:

.MORI.POTIVS.QVAM.FEDARI.

Death rather than blemish.

Beautiful and noble maxim of Anne of Brittany; a maxim of purity, applied to the little flesh-eating animal, whose white fur is, it is said, the object of the assiduous care of the elegant and supple animal that wears it. But in the esoteric symbolism of the sacred Art, the ermine, image of the philosophical mercury, indicates the absolute clarity of a sublimated products, that the addition of sulphur, or metallic fire, contributes to brighten even more.

In Greek, ermine is [*414-1] (*pontichos*), a word derived from [*414-2] (*pontos*), pit, abyss, sea, ocean; it is the pontic water of the philosophers, our mercury, the sea purged again with its own sulphur, sometimes simply the water of our sea, which must be read as the water of our mother ⁽⁵⁾, i.e., the primitive and chaotic matter called subject of the sages. The masters teach us that their second mercury, this pontic water of which we speak, is a permanent water which, contrary to liquid bodies "does not wet the hands", and is their source which flows into the hermetic sea. To obtain it, they say, it is advisable to strike the rock three times, so as to extract from it the pure water mixed with the coarse and solidified water, usually represented by rocky masses emerging from the ocean. The word [*414-1] (*pontios*) specifically expresses all that which inhabits the sea; it calls to mind the hidden fish which the mercury has caught and kept in the mesh of its net, the one that the ancient custom of the celebration of the Twelfth Night offers us in its own form (sole, dolphin) or sometimes in the shape of the "bather" ⁽⁶⁾ or the bean hidden in the layers of the flaky Twelfth Night cake ⁽⁷⁾. The pure and white ermine thus appears as the expressive emblem of the common mercury united to the sulphurous-fish in the substance of the philosophical mercury.

As for the hurdle, it reveals which are the external signs that, according to the Adepts, constitute the best criterion of the secret product and bear witness to a canonical separation conforming to natural laws. The woven hurdle, serving as an enclosure for the ermine and actually as an envelope for the animated mercury, should suffice to explain the drawing of the stigma/stigmata ⁽⁸⁾ in question. However as our aim is to define them unequivocally, we will say that the Greek word [*415-2] (*characoma*), fence, derived from [*415-3] (*charasso*), to trace, to engrave, to mark with an imprint, possesses in fact an origin similar to that of the word [*415-4] (*character*) which means carved lineament, distinctive form, characteristic. And the specific characteristic of mercury is precisely to create on its surface a network of intercrossing lines, woven in the manner of wicker baskets ([*415-5] --- *kalatos*) frail, crates, two-handled baskets, and open baskets. These geometric figures all the more apparent and all the more engraved because the matter is purer, are the effect of the all-powerful will of the Spirit or of the Light. And this will imprints on the substance an external cross-like disposition ([*415-6] --- *Chiasma*), and gives mercury its effective philosophical signature. This is the reason why this envelope is compared to the mesh of the net used to catch the symbolic fish; to the characteristic basket that the [*415-7] (*Ichthus*) of the Roman Catacombs bears on his back; to Jesus' manger, the crib of the Holy Ghost incarnated as men's Savior; to Bacchus' cist, said to contain some mysterious object; to Hercules' crib as the child choked the two snakes sent by Juno, and to that of Moses, saved from the waters; to the Twelfth Night cake, bearer of the same characteristics; to the cake of Little Red Riding Hood, perhaps the most charming creation of these hermetic fables called the Tales of Mother Goose, etc.

But the most significant imprint of the animated mercury, the superficial mark of the work on the metallic spirit, can only be obtained after a series of operations, or long, difficult, forbidding purifications. So, if you want to be assured of success, no pain, no effort should be spared, and time and strain should not be feared. Whatever you may do or attempt to do, never will the spirit remain stable in a filthy or insufficiently purified body. The quite spiritual motto which accompanied our ermine proclaims it: Death rather than blemish. May the artist remember one of the greatest labors of Hercules, the cleaning of the Augean stables: "All the

waters of the flood", say the sages, "must pass through our earth". These are expressive images of the labor demanded by the perfect purification, a simple, easy work but so tedious that it discouraged many alchemists who were more greedy than industrious, more enthusiastic than persevering.

Panel 9 --- Four horns out of which flames escape, with the motto:

.FRVSTRA.

In vain.

It is the succinct translation, engraved in stone, of the four fires of our coction. The authors who spoke of it, describe them as so many different and proportionate degrees of the elementary fire acting in the midst of the Athanor, on the philosophical rebis. At least, such is the meaning suggested to beginners, and that they hurry to put into practice without much further thought.

And yet the philosophers themselves attest that they never speak more obscurely than when they seem to express themselves with precision; their apparent clarity deludes those who let themselves be seduced by the literal meaning, and who do not attempt to make sure whether it agrees or not with observation, reason and the possibility of nature. This is why we must warn the artists, who will try to accomplish the work according to this process that is to say, by submitting the philosophical amalgam to the increasing temperatures of the four regimens of fire, that they will certainly be the victims of their ignorance and frustrated from the desired results. They should first strive to discover what the Ancients meant by the metaphoric expression of fire and that of the four successive degrees of its intensity. For indeed we are not speaking of a cooking fire here, of a fireplace fire, or of a blast furnace fire. "In our work", asserts Philalethes, "common fire only serves to keep away the cold and the accidents it could cause". In another section of the treatise, the same author positively affirms that our coction is linear, i.e., equal, constant, regular, and uniform from the beginning to the end of the work. Almost all philosophers have used as an example this fire of coction or maturation, the incubation of a hen's egg, not in terms of the temperature to be used but in terms of uniformity and permanence. And so we very strongly advise people to consider before anything else the relationship that the sages have established between the fire and the sulphur, so as to obtain this essential notion that the four degrees of the first must infallibly correspond to the four degrees of the second, which is to say much in a few words. Finally in his so minute description of the coction, Philalethes does not forget to point out how much the real operation is removed from its metaphoric analysis because instead of being directed as one generally believes it to be, it has seven stages or regimens, simple reiterations of one and the same technique. In our opinion, these represent the most sincere words that have been said about the secret practice of the four degrees of fire. And, although the order and the development of these works are guarded by the philosophers and always shrouded in silence, the special characteristic which the coction, understood in that way, takes on will nevertheless allow the wise artist to rediscover this simple and natural means, which ought to favor its operation.

Monsieur Louis Audiat, whose rather amusing fantasies have been pointed out during this study, had not asked the ancient science for a plausible explanation of these curious panels. He writes: "There is such a mischievousness in a single word: Frustra, Flaming horns! ⁽⁹⁾ It is in vain that one tries to keep his wife!".

We do not believe that the author, moved by compassion before what he took to be the "testimony" of this unfortunate Adept, meant to show the least irreverence for the memories of the latter's wife. But ignorance is blind and misfortune is bad counselor. M. Louis Audiat should have known better and abstained from generalizing.

(1) Cyrano Bergerac: *The Comical History of the States and Empires of the World of the Moon*. Translated by A. Lovell. H. Rhodes, London, 1687, pp. 28-34. (The part in brackets is where the translation was modified).

(2) Rene Francois: *Essay des Merveilles de nature et des plus nobles artifices (Essay on the Marvels of Nature and on the Most Noble Artifices)*; Lyon, J.Huguetan, 1642, ch. 15, p. 125.

(3) *La Lumiere sortant par soy-mesme des Tenebres (Light Coming by Itself out of Darkness)*, Ch. 2, Song V, p. 16, Op. cit.

(4) Basil Valentine: *The Twelve Keys of Philosophy*

(5) Translator's Note: In French, "mer" (sea) and "mere" (mother) sound alike.

(6) Translator's Note: Literally, a "swimmer", a small china doll included in the Twelfth Night cake. Whoever finds it becomes the king or queen.

(7) Fulcanelli: *Le Mystere des Cathedrales*, Paris, J. Schmidt, 1926, p. 126.

(8) Translator's Note: The French "stigmates" translates both as stigma and stigmata.

(9) Translator's Note: In France, a cuckold is said to bear the horns: these flaming horns must have inflamed M. Audiat's imagination.

THE CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE XI

The eight and last series contains only one panel devoted to the science of Hermes. It represents abrupt rocks of which the wild silhouette rises in the middle of the sea. This stone image bears as ensign:

.DONEC.ERVNT.IGNES.

As long as fire will last.

An allusion to the power of action that man owes to the igneous principle, the spirit, essence, or light of things, the unique factor of all material mutations. Of the four elements of the philosophy of Antiquity, only three are represented here: earth pictured by the rocks, water by the sea waves, air by the sky of the sculpted landscape. As for fire, the animating and modifying agent of the three other elements, it seems to be excluded from the subject only to underline its preponderance, its power, its necessity, as well as the impossibility of any action whatsoever on the substance without the help of this spiritual force capable of penetrating it, of moving it, of changing into the actual that which it bore as a potential.

As long as fire will last, life will radiate in the universe; bodies subjected to the laws of evolution, of which it is the essential agent, will accomplish the different cycles of their metamorphoses up to their final transformation into spirit, light, or fire. As long as fire will last, matter will not cease to pursue its difficult ascent toward integral purity by passing from the compact and solid form (earth) to the liquid form (water), and from the gaseous state (air) to the radiant state (fire). As long as fire will last, man will be able to exercise his industrious activity on the things that surround him and thanks to the marvelous igneous instrument, to submit them to his own will, to bend them, to subject them to uses of his own. As long as fire will last, science will benefit from vast possibilities in all domains of the physical plane; and will see the fields of its knowledge and accomplishments broaden. As long as fire will last, men will be in direct contact with God and the creature will know his Creator better.

No subject of meditation seems to be more profitable to the philosopher; nothing solicits more the exercise of his thought. Fire surrounds us and bathes us from everywhere; it comes to us through air, water, and even the earth, which are its preserving agents and different vehicles; we encounter it in everything to which we come near; we feel its action within us for the entire duration of our earthly existence. Our birth is the result of its incarnation; our life, the effect of its dynamism; our death the consequence of its disappearance. Prometheus steals fire from heaven to animate the man who he had, like God, formed from the mud of the earth.

Vulcan creates Pandora the first woman to whom Mineva gives movement by insufflating into her the vital fire. A simple mortal, the sculptor Pygmalion, desiring to marry his own work, implores Venus to animate, by means of the celestial fire, his statue of Galatea. But to try to discover the nature and essence of fire is to try to discover God, whose real presence is always revealed in a fiery manifestation. The burning bush (*Ex. 3:2*), and Mount Sinai "altogether on a smoke" during the speaking of the Ten Commandments (*Ex. 19:18*) are two manifestations whereby God appeared to Moses. And it is in the shape of a being of jasper, of a flaming color, seated on an incandescent and flashing throne that St John describes the Master of the Universe (*Rev. 4: 3, 5*). "Our God is a consuming fire", writes St Paul, in his *Epistle to the Hebrews* 12:29. It is, then, not without reason that all religions have considered fire as the

clearest image and the most expressive emblem of divinity. "One of the most ancient symbols" said Pluche ⁽¹⁾, "as it became universal, is the fire that was perpetually maintained in the place where the different peoples used to assemble. Nothing was more appropriate to give them a tangible idea of the power, beauty, purity, and eternity of the being that they had come to adore. This magnificent symbol had been in use in all of the Orient. Persians saw it as the most perfect image of divinity. Zoroaster did not introduce its use under Darius Histarpes, but, by new perspectives, he improved the practice which had been established long before him. The Pryantheum of the Greeks were perpetual fires. The Vesta of the Etruscans, of the Sabines, and of the Romans was nothing more. The same custom was found in Peru and in other parts of America. Moses kept the practice of a perpetual fire in the holy place as part of the ceremonies he chose and described in detail to the Israelites. And the same symbol, so expressive, so noble and so unlikely to prompt man into illusion still exists today in all our temples".

To claim that fire results from combustion is to notice a fact commonly observed, yet without providing its explanation. The gaps in modern science for the most part result from this indifference, voluntary or involuntary, toward such an important and widespread agent. What would we think of this strange obstinacy that certain scientists maintain, in failing to recognize the point of contact it constitutes, the connecting link it creates, between Science and Religion? If heat is born from movement, as it is claimed, who then, shall we ask, generates and maintains the movement productive of fire, if not fire itself? A vicious circle out of which materialists and skeptics will never be able to escape. As for us, fire could not be the result or effect of combustion, but rather its true cause. It is by disengagement from the heavy matter which held it imprisoned that fire manifests and that the phenomenon appears that is known under the name of combustion. And whether this disengagement is spontaneous or provoked, a common sense forces us to admit and to sustain that combustion is the result of the igneous disengagement and not the primary cause of fire.

Imponderable, elusive, always in motion, fire possesses all the qualities we acknowledge in Spirits; fire is nevertheless material as we see its light when it shines and, even when it is dark, our sensitivity can detect the presence of its radiating heat. Is not the spiritual quality of fire revealed to us by the flame? Why does the flame always tend to rise as a true spirit, in spite of our efforts to force it to go down to the ground? Is this not a formal manifestation of this will which, by liberating it from material hold, moves it away from the earth and brings it nearer to its celestial native land? And what is the flame if not the fire's true visible form, signature, and effigy?

Above all, we must remember, as a priority in the science which interests us, the high purifying virtue that fire possesses. In the highest sense of the word, a pure physical manifestation of purity itself, it signifies in this manner its spiritual origin and uncovers its divine affiliation. As a rather singular observation, the Greek word [*421-1] (*pur*) which designates fire has exactly the same pronunciation as the French word pure; and the hermetic philosophers, by joining the nominative to the genitive case, created the term [*421-2] (*pur-puros*), the fire of fire, or phonetically, le pur du pur (the pure of the pure) and regarded the Latin purpura and the French pourpre (purple) as the seal of the perfection of the philosophers' stone's own color.

(1) Noel Pluche: *Histoire du Ciel (History of the Heavens)*; Paris, the Widow Estienne, 1739, vol. 1, p. 24.

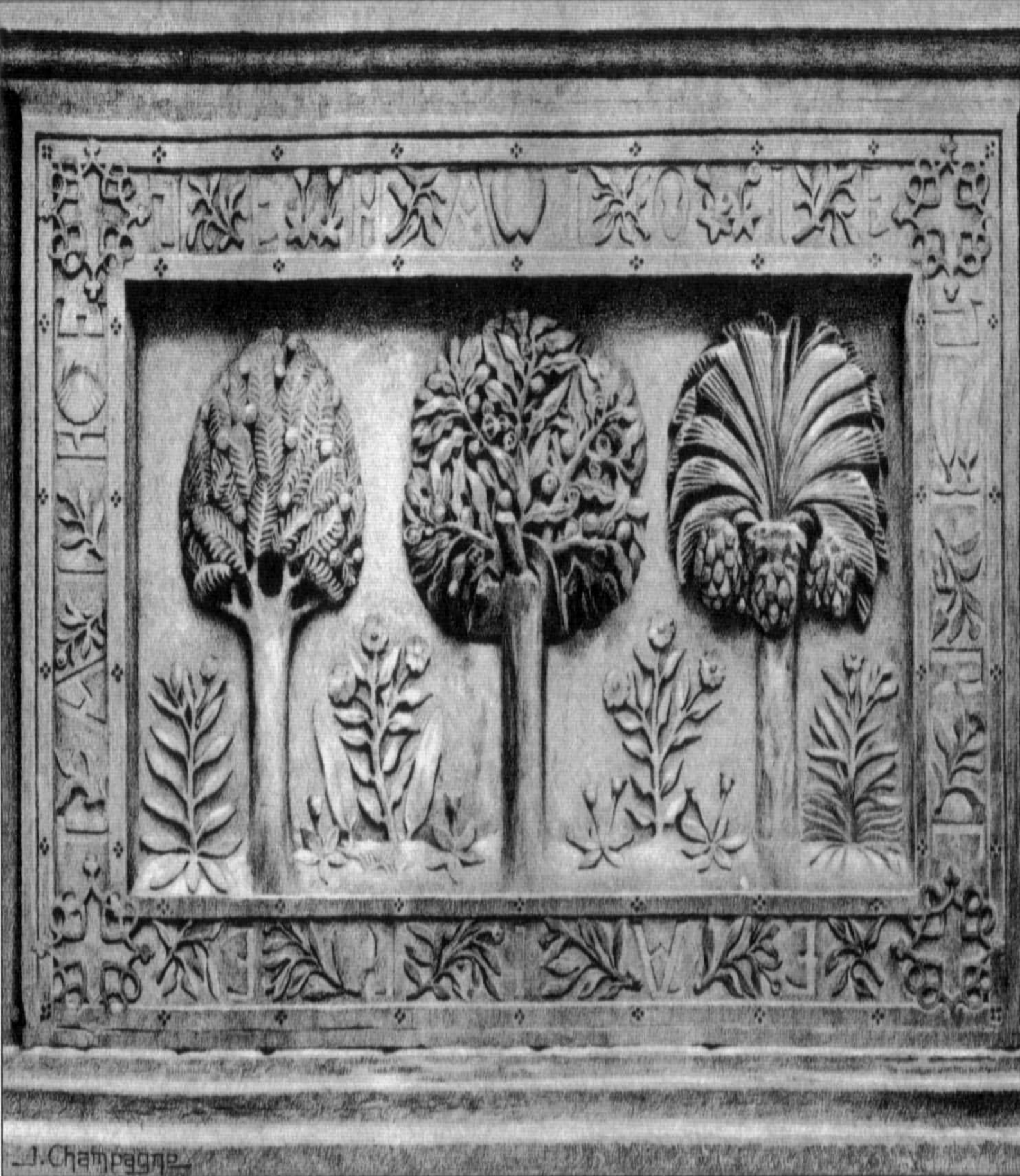
THE CASTLE OF DAMPIERRE XII

Our study of the panels of Dampierre is now complete. We only have to point out a few decorative motifs which, by the way, have no relationship with the preceding ones; they show symmetrical ornaments --- foliage, interlaced designs, Arabian designs, embellished or not with figures --- the workmanship of which denotes a production more recent than that of the symbolic subjects. They are all deprived of phylacteries or inscriptions. Finally, the background slab of a small number of panels are still in wait of the sculptor's hand.

The presumption is that the author of this book of marvels, of which we endeavored to decipher the leaves and signs had, as a consequence of unknown circumstances, to interrupt a work that his successors could neither pursue nor finish for want of understanding it. Be that as it may, the number, the variety, the esoteric significance of the subjects of this wonderful compilation made of the high gallery of the castle of Dampierre an admirable collection, and a genuine museum of alchemical emblems, and put our Adept among the unknown masters who were the most learned in the mysteries of the sacred Art.

But before we leave this masterful ensemble, we will allow ourselves to connect its teaching to that of a curious stone picture that can be seen in Jacques Couer's palace in Bourges and which apparently can serve as a conclusion to, and summary of, our collection. This sculpted panel forms the tympanum of a door opening on the main courtyard, and represents three exotic trees --- a palm tree, a fig tree, and a date tree --- growing in the midst of herbaceous plants; a frame of flowers, leaves, and twigs surround the bas-relief (**Plate XXXIII**).

The palm and date trees, of the same family, were known to the Greeks under the name of [*425-1] (phoenix, and Phoenix in Latin) which is our hermetic phoenix; they represent the two magisteries and their results, the two white and red stones, which partake of one and the same nature included in the cabalistic denomination of Phoenix. As for the fig tree occupying the center of the composition, it indicates the mineral substance out of which the philosophers draw the elements of the miraculous rebirth of the Phoenix, and it is this work of rebirth as a whole which constitutes what is commonly referred to as the Great Work. According to the apocryphal Gospels it was a fig or sycamore fig tree (a.k.a. the fig tree of the Pharoah) which had the honor of sheltering the Holy Family during their flight to Egypt, of nourishing them with its fruit and of quenching their thirst, thanks to the clear and fresh water that the child Jesus had drawn out from between its roots ⁽¹⁾. Fig tree in Greek is [*426-1] (*suke*), from [*426-2] (*sukon*), fig, a word frequently used for [*426-3] (*kusthos*), with the root [*426-4] (*kuo*), to carry in the womb, to contain: it is the Virgin Mother who bears the child, and the alchemical emblem of the passive, chaotic, aquatic, and cold substance, the matrix and vehicle of the spirit incarnate. Sozomeme, a 4th century author, asserts that the tree of Hermopolis which bowed before the infant Jesus was called Persea (*Hist. Eccl. Lib. V, ch. 21*). It is the name of the balanus (*Balanites Aegyptiaca*), a shrub from Egypt and Arabia, a kind of oak, called by the Greeks [*426-5] (*balanos*), acorn, a word by which they also called the myrobalan, fruit of the myrobalan tree. These diverse elements are perfectly related to the subject of the sages and the technique of the *ars brevis* that Jacques Coeur seems to have practiced. Indeed, when the artist, a witness to the fight waged by the Remora and the Salamander, steals from the vanquished igneous monster its two eyes, he must then strive to reunite them into one. This mysterious operation, easy nevertheless for whoever knows how to use the salamander's dead body, yields a little lump, quite similar to the acorn of an oak tree, sometimes to a chestnut, depending upon how much of it is covered with the rough



BOURGES - JACQUES-CŒUR PALACE - TYMPANUM
The Secret Agreement

PLATE XXXIII

matrix from which it can never totally free itself. This provides us with the explanation of the acorn and of the oak tree, which we almost always encounter in hermetic iconography; of the chestnuts, specific to Jacques Lallemand's style; of the heart, the fig, of Jacques Coeur's fig tree; of the little bell, accessory of the jester's rattle; of the pomegranates, pears, and apples frequent in the symbolic works of Dampierre, and Coulonges, etc. On the other hand, if we take into account the magical, quasi-supernatural characteristic of this production, we can understand why certain authors have indicated the hermetic fruit by the name of myrobalan, and also why this term has remained in the French common language a synonym for marvelous, surprising or extremely rare things ⁽²⁾. The priests of Egypt, the principals of the initiatory schools, used to ask the layman soliciting access to the sublime knowledge, this apparently preposterous question: "In your country is the seed of Halalidge and the Myrobalan ever sown?". A question that did not fail to embarrass the ignorant neophyte, but which the skilled investigator could answer. The seed of Halalidge and the Myrobalan are identical with the fig, the fruit of the date tree, with the egg of the Phoenix which is our philosophical egg. It is the one reproducing the legendary eagle of Hermes, whose feathers were dyed with all the colors of the Work, but among which red dominates, as its Greek name [*427-1 (*phoinis*) purple red indicates. De Cyrano Bergerac does not omit to speak about it, in the course of an allegorical tale where is interspersed some of this language of the birds which the great philosopher admirably commanded ⁽³⁾. "I began to fall asleep in the Shade, I perceived in the Air a strange Bird, that hovered over my Head; it supported itself by so slight and imperceptible a motion, that I was many times un doubt, whether it might not be also a little Universe, balanced by its own Creator. However by little and little it descended, and at length came so near, that it filled my Eyes with a delightful Prospect. The Tail of it seemed to be green, its Breast Azure-enameled, its Wings Incarnate, and its Head Purple, which tossed a glittering Crown of Gold, the Rays whereof sparkled from its Eyes. It kept a long time upon the Wing, and I was so attentive to observe what became on it, that my Soul being contracted, and in a manner wrapt up in the sole action of Seeing, it hardly reached my Ear, to let me hear that the Bird spoke as it sung. However, being little by little unbent from my Extasie, I distinctly remarked the Syllables, Words and Discourse which it uttered. To the best of my Memory, then it spun out its Songs into these terms,

"You are a Stranger, whistled the Bird, and have had your birth in a World, of which originally I am. Now that secret propensity to mutual Love, that those of the same Country have one for another, is the instinct, which Inclines me to inform you of my Life...

"I well perceive, you are big with the expectation to learn what I am, it is I who amongst you am called the Phoenix; in every world there is but one at a time which lives there for the space of an Hundred years; for at the end of an Age, when upon some Mountain of Arabia, it has laid a great Egg amidst the Coals of its Funeral Pile, which it has made of the Branches of Aloes, Cinnamon, and Frankincense, it takes its flight, and diverts its course towards the Sun, as the Country to which its heart has long aspired. It has indeed made many attempts before, for accomplishing that Voyage; but the weight of its Egg, which has so thick a shell, that it requires an Age to be hatched in, still retarded the Enterprise.

"I am sensible, that you can hardly comprehend that miraculous Production; and therefore I'll explain it you. The Phoenix is an Hermaphrodite; but amongst Hermaphrodites it is likewise another Phoenix altogether extraordinary, for... ⁽⁴⁾

"It continued half an hour without speaking, and then added: I perceive you suspect what I have told you to be false, but if what I say be not true, the first time I come into your Globe, may an Eagle devour me".

Another author ⁽⁵⁾ dwells further on the mythical-hermetical bird and points out a few of its particularities which it would be difficult to find elsewhere. "The Caesar of Birds", he says, "is the miracle of nature ⁽⁶⁾, who wanted to show through it the extent of her power, showing herself as a Phoenix by forming the Phoenix. She has done wonders in improving it, by giving it a head embellished with royal feathers and imperial aigrettes, a tuft of feathers, and a crest so bright that it seems to bear either a silver crescent or a golden star on its head. The robe and the down are of a shimmering double-gilt which shows all the colors of the world; the big feathers are rosy red, azure, gold, silver, and of flame color; the neck is a choker made of the stones, and not a rainbow, but a Phoenix bow. The tail is of celestial color with a gold luster, which represents the stars. Its tail feathers and its whole robe are like a first spring, rich of all colors; it has two eyes in its head, shining and flaming, which seem to be two stars; gold legs and scarlet nails; its whole chest and its bearing show that it has some feeling of glory, that it knows how to hold its rank and bring out its imperial majesty. Even its flesh has something royal about it because it only eats drops of incense and chrism of balm. When it was in its crib, says Lactantius, the heaven distilled nectar and ambrosia for it. It alone is witness to all the ages of the world, and it has seen the golden souls of the golden age turn into silver, from silver into brass, and from brass into iron. It alone has never given the sky and the world the slip; it alone scoffs at death, making it its nurse and mother, making it give birth to life. It alone has the privilege of time, of life and of death together. For when it feels laden with years, weighted down by old age and cast down by such a long sequence of years, that it saw to follow on after the other, it lets itself be carried by its desire and proper longing to renew itself by a miraculous death. Then it makes a pile which alone in the world bears no name, for it is not a nest, or a crib, or the place of its birth since it dies there; but it is not a tomb, a coffin, or a funereal urn because in it, it recovers its life; so that I do not know what another inanimate Phoenix is, being nest and tomb, matrix and sepulcher, at once a house for life and for death, which for the sake of the phoenix, work together for this occasion. And, whatever it may be, it is there in the trembling arm a palm tree ⁽⁷⁾, that it makes a collection of small sprigs of cinnamon and incense, and on the incense, cassia, and on cassia spikenard; then with a pitiful look, commending its soul to the Sun, its murderer and its father, it alights or lies down on this balmy stake to get rid of its trying years. The Sun, favoring the just desires of this Bird, lights the pyre and reducing everything to ashes with a musky blast, makes it breath its last. Then poor Nature finds herself in a trance and with horrible spasms, fearing to lose the honor of this great world, then orders everything in the world to be quiet; the clouds would not dare pour the slightest drop of water on the ashes nor on the earth; the winds no matter how enraged would not dare run through the countryside; alone the Zephyr is the master, and springtime has the upper hand while the ash is inanimate, and nature holds everything so that the return of her Phoenix is favored. O great miracle of divine providence! Almost at the same time, this cold ash, not wanting to leave poor nature mourning for long or to frighten her, warmed up, I know not how, by the fecundity of the golden rays of the Sun, then turns itself into a little worm, then an egg, then into a Bird, ten times more beautiful than the other. You could say that all of nature was resurrected, for indeed, according to what Pliny writes. The sky again starts its revolutions and its sweet music; and you could properly say that the four elements, without saying anything, sing the motet for four with their flourishing gaiety, as a chant of glory to nature and to mark the return of the miracle of the Birds and of the World. **(Plate XXXIV)**.

Like those at Dampierre, the panel with the three trees sculpted in the palace at Bourges bears a motto. On the border of the frame decorated with flower-bearing branches, the attentive observer indeed discovers isolated letters, very cleverly concealed. Their connection composes one of the favorite maxims of the great artist that Jacques Coeur was:



ROUEN - MANSION OF BOURGTHEROULDE (16TH CENTURY)
The Phoenix on his Immortality

PLATE XXXIV

.DE.MA.JOIE.DIRE.FAIRE.TAIRE.

About my Joy, Say it, Do it, Be Silent.

Now the Adept's joy resides in his occupation. The work which renders this marvel of nature more tangible and more familiar to him --- which so many ignorant people call chimera --- constitute his best distraction and its most noble enjoyment. In Greek the word [*430-1] (*chara*), joy, derived from [*430-2] (*chairō*), to rejoice, to delight in, to enjoy, also means to love. The famous philosopher, then clearly alludes to the labor of the Work, his dearest task, of which moreover so many symbols have come to enhance the glamour of his sumptuous house. But what to say, what to admit of this unique joy, of this pure and complete satisfaction, the intimate cheerfulness of success? The least possible, if we do not want to break the oath, to attract envy from some, greed from the others, jealousy from all, and the risk of becoming the prey of the powerful. What to do then with the result about which the artist, according to the rules of our discipline, promises to use in a modest fashion? To always use it for the good, to consecrate its fruit to the exercise of charity, in conformity to the precepts of philosophy and to Christian ethics. Finally what should we keep silent about? Absolutely everything which concerns the alchemical secret and its practical use; for the revelation, remaining God's exclusive privilege, the disclosure of its process remains forbidden, non-communicable in clear language, only permitted when veiled by parables, allegories, images or metaphors.

Jacques Coeur's motto, in spite of its conciseness and implications, turns out to be in perfect accord with the traditional teachings of the eternal wisdom. No philosopher, truly worthy of the name, would refuse to subscribe to the rules of conduct which it expresses and which can be translated in this way:

About the Great Work, say little, do much, and always be silent.

(1) Cf. *Evangile de l'Enfance (The Gospel of the Childhood of Jesus)*, ch. 23, 25, in the *Apocryphal Writings of Migne*, vol. 1, p. 995

(2) The French word is now spelled "mirobolant" but its etymology and pronunciation have not changed.

(3) De Cyrano Bergerac: *History of the Birds in The Comical History, Of the States and Empires of the World of the Sun*; Transl. By A. Louvell; H. Rhodes, London, 1687, pp. 97-100.

(4) The author abruptly interrupts his revelation.

(5) Rene Francois: *Essay des Merveilles de Nature et des plus Nobles Artifices (Essay about the Marvels of Nature and the Most Noble Artifices)*; Lyon, J. Huguetam, 1642, ch. 5, p. 69.

(6) A hermetic expression only used for the philosophers' stone.

(7) We encounter once more the symbolical palm tree of Delos, against which Latona leaned when she gave birth to Apollo, according to what is reported by Callamachus in his Hymn to Delos:

"To celebrate, O Delos, these fortunate moments,
A pure gold glistened down to your foundation
Gold covered your palm tree with a bright leaf
Gold colored your lake with shiny waves
And, for an entire day, from your deepest abyss
Inopus vomited pure gold in large bubbles".

THE BODYGUARDS OF FRANCIS II

DUKE OF BRITTANY I

When around the year 1502, Anne, Duchess of Brittany and twice Queen of France, drew up the plan of reuniting in a mausoleum worthy of the veneration that she held them in, the bodies of her deceased parents, she entrusted the execution of this task to a highly talented artist from Brittany, about whom we possess very little information, Michel Colombe. She was then 25 years of age. Her father, Duke Francis II, had died at Coueron, 14 years earlier, Sept. 9, 1488, surviving the death of his second wife, Marguerite de Foix, Mother of Queen Anne by only 16 months. She had died May 15, 1487.

This mausoleum, begun in 1502, was completed only in 1507. The plan was the work of Jean Perreal. As for the sculptures that makes it one of the purest masterpieces of the Renaissance, they were made by Michel Colombe, who was helped in this work by two of his students: Guillaume Regnauld, his nephew and Jehan Chartres, "his disciple and servant", although the latter's collaboration is not totally certain. A letter written Jan. 4, 1511 by Jean Perreal to the secretary of Marguerite of Burgundy, on the occasion of the works that this princess had made in the Chapel of Brou, tells us that "Michel Colombe worked by the month and was getting 20 ecus ⁽¹⁾ per month for a period of five years". He was paid 1,200 ecus for the sculpture work and the total cost of the tomb was 560 pounds ⁽²⁾.

According to Marguerite of Brittany and Francis II's desire to be buried in the church of Carmes in Nantes, Anne had the mausoleum erected there and it took on the name of Tomb of the Carmes, under which it is generally known and referred to. It remained in place until the Revolution, and when the Church of the Carmes was sold as a national property, it was removed and secretly kept by an art enthusiast who wanted to withhold this masterpiece from revolutionary vandalism. Once the upheaval had receded, it was rebuilt in 1819 in the Cathedral of St Peter of Nantes, where it can be admired today. The vaulted sepulcher, built under the show mausoleum, contained, when it was opened by order of the King, by Mellier, mayor of Nantes, Oct. 16-17, 1727, the three coffins of Francis II, of Marguerite of Foix, second wife of the duke and Queen Anne's mother. A little box was also found there; it contained a "pure and clean gold" reliquary in the shape of an egg, surmounted by the royal crown, covered with inscriptions of finely enameled letters and containing the heart of Anne of Brittany, whose body rests in the Basilica of St Denis ⁽³⁾.

Among the descriptive accounts which several authors have left us about the Tomb of Carmes, some of which are very detailed, we will preferably choose, to give an overview of the work, the one of Brother Mathias of St John, Carme of Nantes, who published it in the 17th century ⁽⁴⁾.

"But that which seems to be quite rare and most worthy of admiration", says this author, "is the Tomb raised in the heart of the Church of the Carmes Monks, which, everyone agrees, is one of the most beautiful and magnificent which can be seen, and which forces me to give a specific description to satisfy the curious mind.

"The devotion that the ancient Dukes of Brittany held since a long time for the Holy Virgin, Mother of God, patroness of the Order and for this church of the Holy Fathers of the Carmes and the affection they had for the Religious of this House, led them to chose this ground for

their burial places. And Queen Anne, as a unique testimony of her compassion and affection for this place wanted to have this beautiful monument raised there in memory of her father, Francis II, and her mother, Marguerite of Foye.

"It is built in a square fashion, eight feet wide and 14 feet long: all made using fine Italian black and white marble, porphyry and alabaster. The main part of the Word is raised by 6 feet from the ground with 6 niches, each 2 feet high, with their back parts made of finely carved porphyry, ornamented all around with pillars of white marble, in the proper proportions and rules of architecture, enriched with very delicately worked moresques (arabesques): and all the 12 niches are filled with the white marble figure of the 12 apostles, each having a different posture and the instruments of his martyrdom. Both ends of the main building are ornamented with a similar architecture, and each is divided into 2 niches similar to the others. At the end, towards the master altar of the church, are placed in these niches the figures of St Francis of Assisi and of St Marguerite, patron saints of the last Duke and Duchess which are buried there; and at the other end in two similar niches are seen, in the same way, the two figures of St Charlemagne and St Louis, King of France. Below the said 16 niches which surround the main part of the tomb are as many cavities made in a round fashion, of 14 inches in diameter, the back part of which is made of carved white marble in the shape of a shell, and all filled with figures of mourners in their funeral clothes, in various postures, whose workmanship is taken into consideration by very few people, but admired by all who know it for what it truly is.

"This part is covered by a large table of black marble, made all of one piece, which exceeds the solid body (mass of the tomb) by approximately 8 inches all around, creating a sort of cornice to serve as an entablature and an ornament of the main part of the tomb. On this stone two great figures of white marble are lying, each 8 feet long, one representing the Duke and the other the Duchess with their ducal clothes and coronets. Three white marble Angels, each 3 feet tall, holding squares (pillows) under the heads of these figures, which seem to soften under the weight and the angels cry. At the feet of the figure of the Duke there is a figure of a lion, lying down, as in nature, bearing on its mane the coat of arms of Brittany; and at the feet of the figure of the Duchess, there is the figure of a Greyhound also bearing round its neck the coat of arms of the House of Foie, which the art animates marvelously well.

"But what is most marvelous in this piece are the 4 figures of the Cardinal Virtues, made of white marble, and 6 feet high, placed at the four corners of the sepulture: they are so well carved, so well placed, and are so life like that the natives of the city and foreigners all admit that nothing can be seen which is better, neither in the Antiquities of Rome, nor in the modern statues of Italy, France, or Germany. The figure of Justice is placed on the right side as one enters, holding a raised sword in the right hand and a book and scales in the left one, a crown on her head dressed with fur and skins which are the marks of the science, equity, severity, and majesty which accompany this virtue.

"Opposite, on the left side, is the figure of Prudence which has two faces opposite one another on the same head: that of an old man with a long beard, the other of a young lad (5): in the right (on the left) hand she holds a convex mirror at which she stares, in the other hand a compass: at her feet appears a serpent, and these things are symbols of the consideration and the wisdom with which this virtue proceeds in her actions.

"At the right angle, on the upper side, is the figure of Strength dressed in a coat of mail (armor) and a helmet on her head; in her left hand she carries a tower, out of whose crevices a

serpent (dragon) emerges, which she strangles with her right hand; this marks the vigor which this virtue uses in misfortunes to prevent violence or to bear its burden.

"On the opposite corner is the figure of Temperance, clad in a long robe girding on a ribbon a belt: in her right hand she bears the working s of a clock and in the other the bit of a bridle, hieroglyphs for the regulation and moderation that this virtue puts on human passions".

The eulogies that Brother Mathias of St John writes of these bodyguards of Francis II, represented by the cardinal virtues of Michel Colombe (6) seems to us perfectly deserved. "These four statues", says de Caumont (7), "are admirable for their grace and simplicity. The garments are sculpted with a rare perfection and in each figure a very marked individuality can be observed although the four are equally noble and beautiful".

These are statues, impresses with the purest symbolism, guardians of tradition and of ancient science, that we will study in detail.

(1) Translator's note: Ecu was the currency used at the time.

(2) Cf. Abbott G. Durville: *Etudes sur le vieux Nantes (Studies about the old city of Nantes)*, Vol. II, Vannes, Lafolye Freres, 1915.

(3) The Canon of Durville, from whose book we borrow these details, was kind enough to send us a picture about this curious piece, which is unfortunately empty of its contents, and now a part of the collections at the Dobree Museum of Nantes, of which he is the curator. "I am sending you", he writes, "a small photograph of this precious reliquary. I have placed it for one moment at the very location where Queen Anne's heart was, thinking that this circumstance would capture even more your interest for this little souvenir". We are thankful to M. the Canon Durville for his solicitude and delicate attention.

(4) *Le Commerce Honorable...*, composed by an inhabitant of Nantes; Nantes, G. Le Monnier, 1646, p. 308-312.

(5) Translator's note: Brother Mathias saw a young lad, although the drawings of the statue seem to represent a young woman.

(6) Michel Colombe, born in 1460 at Saint-Pol-de-Leon was about 45 when he sculpted them.

(7) De Caumont: *Cours d'Antiquities Monumentales*; 1841, 6th part, p. 445.

BODYGUARDS II

With the exception of Justice, the cardinal virtues no longer are represented with the singular attributes which gave the ancient figures their enigmatic and mysterious characteristics. Under the pressure of more realistic designs, the symbolism was transformed. The artists, abandoning all idealization of thought, preferably abide by naturalism. They closely follow the expression of the attributes and facilitate the identification of the allegorical characters. However, while perfecting their technique and coming closer to modern formulas, they have, unconsciously, struck a mortal blow to traditional truth. For the ancient sciences, transmitted under the veil of various emblems, are answerable to the science of Diplomats and are presented with a double meaning, one apparent and understandable by everyone (exoteric), the other, hidden, accessible only to initiates (esoteric). By specifying the symbol, limited to its positive, ordinary, and defined function, by individualizing it to the point of excluding from it all connected or relative ideas, it is stripped of this double meaning, of this secondary expression which gave it its very didactic value and its essential significance. The ancients represented Justice, Fortune and Love with blindfolded eyes. Did they only mean to express the sightlessness of one, and the blindness of the others? Could we not discover in the attribute of the blindfold, a special reason for this artificial and probably necessary darkness? It would suffice to know that these figures, commonly subjected to human vicissitudes, also belonged to the scientific tradition, to easily recognize the reason. And we would then become aware that the occult meaning proves to be clearer than that obtained by a direct analysis, or by a superficial perusal. When the poets relate that Saturn, the father of the gods, devoured his children, we believe along with the *Encyclopedia* that "such a metaphor serves to characterize a period, an institution, etc., whose circumstances or results become fatal to the very people who should only benefit from it". But if we substitute, for this general interpretation, the positive and scientific reason which constitutes the background of legends and of myths, truth becomes immediately clear, luminous, and patent. Hermeticism teaches that Saturn, the symbolic representative of the first earthly metal, and generator of the others, is also their unique and natural solvent; and since every dissolved metal is assimilated into the solvent and loses its characteristics, it is accurate and logical to state that the solvent "eats" the metal, as the legendary old man devours his progeny.

We could give numerous examples of this duality of meaning expressed by traditional symbolism. This one suffices to prove that, along with the moral Christian interpretation of the cardinal virtues, there is a second, secret, profane, ordinarily unknown teaching which belongs to the material domain of ancestral acquisitions and knowledge. So, sealed in the shape of the same emblem, we find once again the harmonious union of Science and Religion, so fertile in marvelous results, but that modern skepticism refuses to recognize and always conspires to thrust aside.

"The topic of Venus", very justly remarks M. Paul Vitry ⁽¹⁾, "was formed in the 13th century in Gothic art. But, added the author, while the series always remained variable with us as to its number, order, and attributes; it became set rather early in Italy and was limited to the three theological virtues: Faith, Hope and Charity or, even more often yet to the four cardinal Virtues: Prudence, Justice, Strength, and Temperance. In addition, it was applied early to the ornamentation of funereal monuments.

"As to the fashion in which these Virtues were more or less characterized, it seems to have been set with Orcagna and his gold tabernacle of San Michele around the middle of the 14th

century. Justice carries the sword and the scales and this will never change. The main attribute of Prudence is the snake; sometimes one or more books were added to it, later a mirror. Almost from the very beginning, according to an idea similar to Dante's who gave three eyes to his Prudence, the image makers gave two faces to this virtue. Temperance sometimes sheathed her sword, but more often than not, holds two vases and seems to be mixing water and wine: it is the elementary symbol of sobriety. Finally, Strength bears Sampson's attributes; she is armed with the shield and club; sometimes she has a lion's skin on her head and a disk representing the world in her hands; other times, and this will become her definitive attribute, at least in Italy, she holds an entire or a broken column...

"Contrary to the rest of the large monuments, the manuscripts, books, and engravings were in charge of spreading the Italian style of the Virtues and could even make it known to those, who like Colombe, had probably not made the trip to Italy. A series of Italian engravings at the end of the 15th century, known as the Italian Card Deck, shows us in the midst of representations of different social conditions, the Muses, the gods of antiquity, the liberal arts, etc., a series of figures of the Virtues; they are given the very same attributes we just described...

We have here a very curious specimen of these documents which could have been brought back by people like Perreal, who had followed expeditions; documents which were allowed to circulate in artists' studios and inspired topics until they could impose a new style.

"Besides, this symbolic language was easily understood in our country; it was totally in accordance with the allegorical spirit of the 15th century. In order to become aware of it, it suffices to think of the Roman de la Rose and of all the literature which was thereafter produced. The miniaturists had abundantly illustrated these books, and even apart from the allegories of nature, from these diversions and make-believe, French art certainly did not fail to know the series of Virtues, although it was not a theme used as frequently as in Italy".

Yet, without absolutely denying some Italian influence in the splendid figures of the Tomb of the Carmes, Paul Vitry notes the novel, essentially French characteristic that Michel Colombe was to give the Italian ultramontane elements brought back by Jean Perreal. "If we were to admit", continues the author, "that they borrowed the initial idea from the Italian tombs, Perreal and Colombe would not have accepted without modification the theme of the cardinal Virtues". Indeed, "Temperance will carry in her hands a clock and a bit with its bridle instead of the two vases that the Italians used to give her. As for Strength, armed and helmeted, instead of her column, she will hold a tower, a sort of crenellated donjon, out of which she tears away a struggling dragon. Neither in Rome, Florence, Milan, nor Como (south door of the cathedral) do we recognize anything similar to this".

But while we can easily discern in the cenotaph of Nantes the respective part which belongs to the masters Perreal and Colombe, it is more difficult to discover the extent of the personal influence and will of the founder. For we cannot believe that during five years she took no part in a work that was very dear to her heart. Could Queen Anne, that gracious sovereign whom her people, in their naive affection, lovingly called "the good duchess with the wooden shoes", have known the esoteric meaning of the guardians of the mausoleum raised in memory of her parents? We would very willingly resolve this question in the affirmative. Her biographers state that she was well educated, gifted with a keen intelligence and a remarkable clairvoyance. Her library seems already big for the time. "According to the only document", says Le Roux de Lincy ⁽²⁾, "which I was able to discover relative to the entire library formed by Anne of Brittany (*Index des Comptes de Depenses de 1498 --- Index of the Accounts*

Payable of the Year 1498) there were hand-written and printed books in Latin, French, Italian, Greek, and Hebrew, 1,140 books, taken in Naples by Charles VIII and that were given to the queen... We could perhaps be surprised to see Greek and Hebrew books represented in the collection of the Queen Duchess; but we should remember that she had studied these two learned languages and that the nature of her mind was, above all, serious". She is depicted as eager to talk with diplomats, whom she pleased to answer in their own tongue, which would justify the very careful multilingual education and probably also mastery of the hermetic cabala, the gay-savoir or the double science. Did she keep company with reputed scientists of her time and among them, perhaps, with contemporary alchemists? We lack information about the subject although it seems difficult to explain why the great fireplace of the drawing room of the Lallemand mansion bears Anne of Brittany's ermine and Louis XII's porcupine, if one cannot see there a testimony of their presence in the philosopher's dwelling of Bourges. Be that as it may, her personal wealth was considerable. Crafted goldware, gold ingots, and precious gems formed the body of an almost inexhaustible treasure. The abundance of such wealth rendered easy the exercise of a generosity quickly become popular. Chroniclers tell us that she gladly paid, with the gift of a diamond, a poor minstrel who had entertained her for a few minutes. As for the liveries, they presented the hermetic colors chosen by her: black, yellow and red before Charles VIII's death, and only the two extremes of the Work, black and red, after that time. Finally, she was the first queen of France who, resolutely breaking with the previous established custom, wore black mourning clothes for the death of her first husband, when protocol dictated sovereigns to always wear white.

(1) *Paul Vitry: Michel Colombe et la sculpture de son temps*; Paris, E. Levy, 1901, p. 395.

(2) *Le Roux de Lincy: Vie de la Reine Anne de Bretagne, femme des Rois de France Charles VIII and Louis XII*; Paris, L. Curmer, 1860, vol. 2, p. 34.

BODYGUARDS III

The first of the four statues we are to study is the one which offers the various attributes in charge of specifying the allegorical expression of Justice: the lion, the scales, and the sword. But apart from the esoteric meaning clearly different from the moral sense given to these attributes, Michel Colombe's figure reveals other signs of her occult personality. No detail, however tiny, should be neglected in an analysis of this kind, without first having undergone a serious examination. Now the ermine surcoat worn by Justice is fringed with roses and pearls. The forehead of our Virtue bears a ducal coronet which has led some to believe that it reproduces the features of Anne of Brittany; the pommel of the sword she holds in her right hand is ornamented with a radiating sun; finally, and this is her chief feature, she appears here unveiled. The peplum, covering her entirely has slipped on her body; retained by the protrusion of the arms, it comes to cover the lower part of the coat; the glaive has left its brocaded sheath, which can now be seen suspended on the tip of the sword (**Plate XXXV**).

As Justice's essence and *raison d'être* demand that she hide nothing, and as the search for, and manifestation of, truth obliges her to show herself to all in the full light of equality, the veil, half drawn back, must necessarily reveal the secret individuality of a second figure, artfully concealed under the form and attributes of the first. This second figure is none other than Philosophy.

In Roman antiquity, the *peplum*, (Greek [*447-1] --- *peplos* or [*447-2] --- *pepla*) was a veil ornamented with embroidery used to dress the statue of Minerva, daughter of Jupiter, and the only goddess whose birth was a miraculous. Indeed, mythology says that she sprung forth fully armed from the brain of her father, whose head, by the order of the Master of Olympus, Vulcan had split. Hence her Hellenic name of Athena --- [*447-3] (*Athena*), formed from the privative prefix *peplos*, and [*448-2] (*tithene*, wet nurse, mother, meaning born without a mother. A personification of the Wisdom or Knowledge of things, Minerva, must be regarded as the divine and creative thought, materialized in all nature, latent in ourselves as it is in everything that surrounds us. But we are speaking here of feminine clothing, a woman's veil ([*448-3] --- *chalumma*) and this word gives us another explanation for the symbolic peplum. Chalumma comes from [*448-4] (*calupto*) to cover, envelope, hide, which formed [*448-5] (*calus*), rose bud, and also [*448-6] (*calupso*), Greek name for the nymph Calypso, queen of the mythical island of Ogygiae which the Greeks called [*448-7] (*Ogugios*), a term akin to the word [*448-8] (*Ogugia*), which has the meaning of ancient and great. Here again is the mystical rose, the flower of the Great Work, better known as the Philosophers' Stone. So that it becomes easy to understand the relationship between the expression of the veil and that of the roses and pearls ornamenting the fur surcoat since this stone is also called precious pearl (*Margarita pretiosa*). "Alciat", says Brother Noel, "represents Justice with the features of a virgin whose crown is golden and whose tunic is white, covered with an ample purple drape. Her eyes are soft and her bearing modest. She bears on her bosom a rich jewel, symbol of her inestimable value, and she has her left foot in a square stone". The dual nature of the Magistry could not be better described, its colors, the high value of this cubic stone which carries Philosophy as a whole, masked for common people under the features of Justice.

Philosophy confers on those who espouse it a great power of investigation. She enables penetration of the intimate construction of things which she cuts short as with a sword discovering in it the presence of the *spiritus mundi*, of which the classical masters speak, and which has its center in the sun and draws its virtue and motion from the radiation of the



CATHEDRAL OF NANTES
Tomb of Francis II - Justice (16th Century)

PLATE XXXV

heavenly body. She also gives knowledge of the general laws, rules, rhythms, and measures observed by nature in the elaboration, evolution, and perfection of created things (the scales). She finally establishes the possibility of acquiring sciences based on observation, meditation, faith, and written teachings (the book). By the same attributes, this image of Philosophy also teaches us the essential points of the labor of the Adepts and proclaims the necessity for manual labor imposed on seekers desiring to acquire the positive notion, and the indisputable proof of its reality. Without technical research, without frequent attempts, nor reiterated experiments we can only go astray in a science whose best treatises carefully hide the physical principles, their application, the materials, and the time required. Then whoever dares to claim to be a philosopher and does not want to labor for fear of cold, fatigue or the expense, must be regarded as the most vain of ignoramuses, or the most shameless of imposters. "I can give evidence", said Augustine Thierry, "which, coming from me won't be questioned: there is in the world something better than material pleasures, better than wealth, better than health itself; it is devotion to science". The activity of the sage is not measured by the results of speculative propaganda; it is mastered at the furnace in the solitude and silence of the laboratory, and not anywhere else. It manifests itself with neither claims nor verbiage, through the careful study, the accurate and persevering examination of reaction and of phenomena. Whoever acts differently, will sooner or later verify Solomon's maxim (Prov. 21:25): "The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labor". The genuine scientist does not shrink from effort; he does fear suffering because he knows it is the penalty for science and that it alone will give him the means to understand a proverb, and the interpretation; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings... (Prov. 1:6).

As to what concerns the practical value of the attributes given to Justice, regarding the hermetic labor, the student will find through experience that the energy of the universal spirit has its signature in the glaive and that the glaive has a correspondence in the sun, as the animator and perpetual modifier of all physical substances. It is the unique agent of the successive metamorphoses of the original matter, the subject and foundation of the Magistry. Through its agency, mercury is changed into sulphur, sulphur into an Elixir, and the Elixir into a Medicine, which then receives the name of the Crown of the Sage, because this threefold mutation confirms the truth of the secret teaching and consecrates the glory of its fortunate artisan. Possessing the ardent and multiplied sulphur, masked under the term of the Philosophers' Stone, it is to the Adept what the triple crown is to the pope and the crown to the monarch: the major emblem of sovereignty and wisdom.

We have often had the opportunity to explain the meaning of the open book characterized by the radical solution of the metallic body, which, having left its impurities behind and yielded its sulphur, is then said to be open. But we have to make another remark. Under the Latin name *liber* and under the image of book, adopted to qualify the matter, withholder of the solvent, the sages meant to designate the closed book, the general symbol for all crude mineral or metallic bodies, such as given to us by nature or such as human industry delivers to the market. And so, minerals extracted from an ore-bearing bed, and metals out of casting are hermetically expressed by a closed or sealed book. Similarly, these bodies, when submitted to alchemical work, modified by the application of occult processes, are translated into iconography with the help of the open book. It is therefore necessary in practice to extract the mercury from the closed book of our primitive subject, so as to obtain it living and open, if we want it to be in turn able to open the metal and revivify the inert sulphur it contains. The opening of the first book prepares that of the second. For, hidden under the same emblem, are two closed books (the crude subject and the metal) and two open books (the mercury and the sulphur) although these hieroglyphic books really add up to being one and the same, since the metal comes from the initial matter and sulphur originates in mercury.

As for the scales applied against the book it would suffice to point out that they translate the necessity of weights and ratios, in order to feel exempt from having to speak of it further. Now this faithful image of the utensil used for the weighing and to which chemists assign an honorable place in their laboratories also conceals an Arcanum of the highest importance. This is the reason why it forces us to account for it and to briefly indicate that which the scales hide under the angles and symmetry of their form.

When the philosophers consider the weight ratios among matters, they mean to speak of one or the other part of a double esoteric knowledge: the weight of nature and the weights of art ⁽¹⁾. Unfortunately, said Solomon, the sages hide the science; bound to remain within the narrow limits of their vow and respectful of an accepted discipline, they take care never to clearly establish how the two secrets differ one from another. We shall see to it to tread farther than they did and shall say in all sincerity that the weights of the art are exclusively applicable to separate bodies, that can be weighed, while the weight of nature refers to the relative ratios of the components of a given body. So that, describing the reciprocal quantities of different matters, in view of effecting their regular and appropriate blending, the authors truly speak of the weights of the art; on the contrary, if they are speaking of quantitative values within a synthetic and radical combination, such as that of sulphur and mercury principles united in the philosophers' mercury, it is the weight of nature which is then considered. And we shall add in order to remove all confusion from the reader's mind that, while the weights of art is known to the artist and rigorously determined by him, on the other hand the weight of nature is always unknown even to the greatest masters. This mystery is answerable to God alone, and its intelligence remains inaccessible to man.

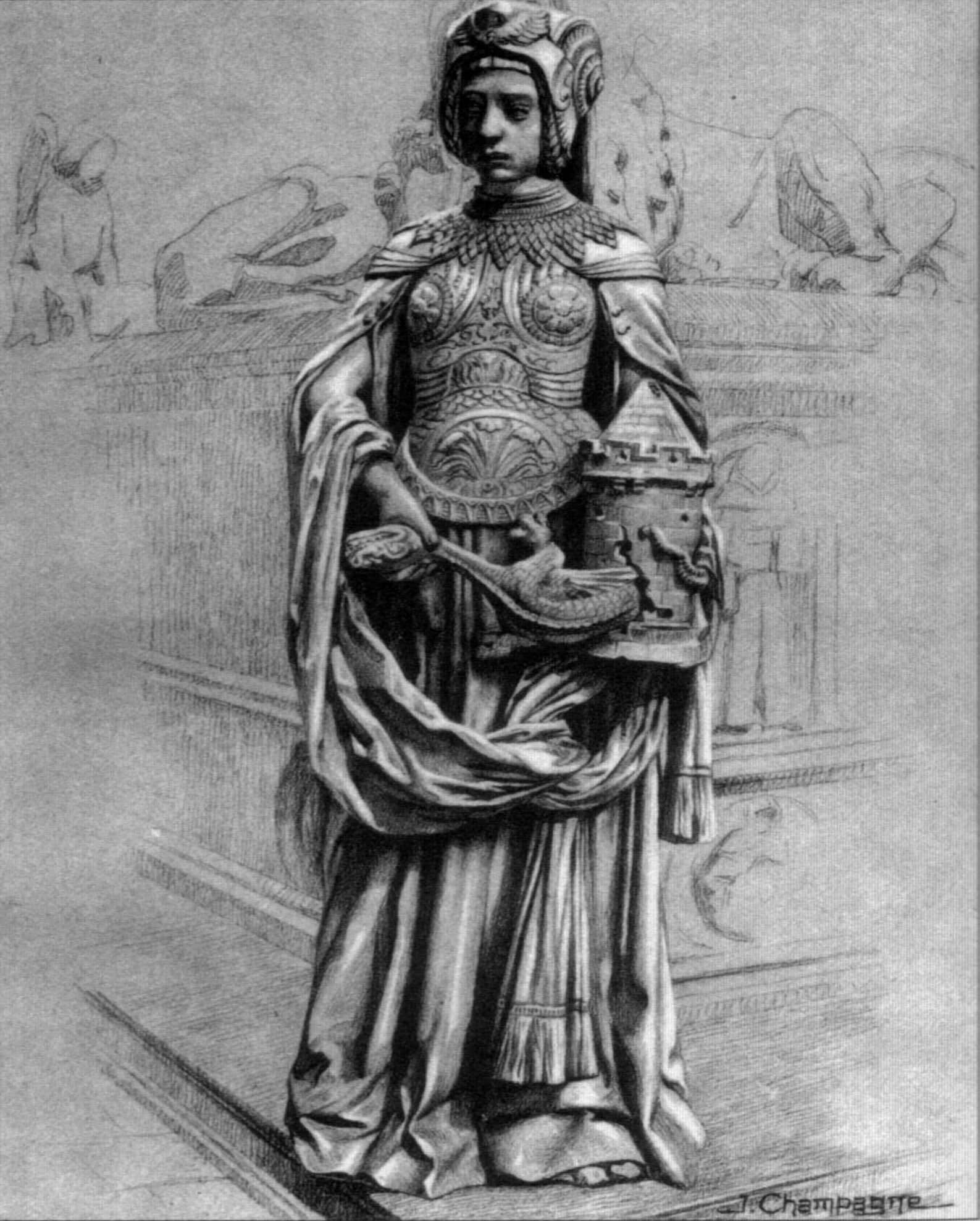
The Work begins and ends with the weights of the art; so the alchemists preparing the way prompts nature to begin and to perfect this great labor. But, in between these extremities, the artist does not need the scales, the weight of nature intervening alone, so that the making of common mercury, that of the philosophical mercury, and the operations known as imbibitions, etc., are done without anyone being able to know, even if approximately, the quantities retained or decomposed, the assimilation rate of the basis as well as the proportion of the spirits. This is what the Cosmopolite insinuates when he says that the mercury does not take any more sulphur than what it can absorb and retain. In other words, the proportion of assimilable matter, as it depends directly upon the appropriate metallic energy, remains variable and cannot be evaluated. All the work is therefore subject to natural and acquired qualities, as much of the agent as of the subject. Supposing that the agent is obtained with the maximum of virtue --- which is rarely achieved --- the basic matter, such as nature offers to us, is quite removed from being constant and similar to itself. We will say about this, for having often controlled its effects, that the assertion of some authors founded upon certain external particularities --- yellow spots, efflorescences, red plaques or spots --- do not merit to be taken into consideration. The mining region could give better indications on the quality sought for, although a few samples taken from the block of the ore-bearing layer sometimes reveal among themselves considerable differences.

So, without resorting to abstract influences nor to mystical interventions, can we explain why the philosophers' stone, in spite of an exactly performed work, in accordance with natural necessities, never leaves in the hands of the worker a body of equal power, and of a transmutative energy in direct and constant relationship with the quantity of materials used.

(1) Not until the time where the lover, having for the third time renewed the weights, Atalanta gave the reward to her victor (M. Maier: *Atalanta Fugiens*).

BODYGUARDS IV

Here is, in our opinion, Michel Colombe's masterpiece and the main piece of the tomb of the Carmes. "By itself", writes Leon Palustre ⁽¹⁾, "this statue of Strength would suffice to bring glory to a man, and we cannot help feeling an acute and deep emotion. The majesty of the posture, the nobility of the expression, the grace of the gesture --- which perhaps we would prefer more vigorous --- are, as many revealing characteristics of a more consummate mastery, of an incomparable skill in workmanship". With her head covered by a flat morion with a lion's snout in the front, and her bust draped with a finely chiseled corselet, Strength holds a tower in her left hand and drawn forth in the right, not a serpent, as most descriptions portend, but a winged dragon, which she strangles by squeezing its neck. An ample drape with long fringes, whose folds are held by her forearms, forms a loop through which one of her extremities passes. This cloth, which, in the sculptor's mind, should have covered the emblematic Virtue, confirms what we have said previously. Just like Justice, Strength appears unveiled (**Plate XXXVI**). Daughter of Jupiter and Themis, sister of Justice and Temperance, the ancients honored her as a divinity without endowing her images with the particular attributes we see her offer today. In Greek antiquity, the statues of Hercules, with the hero's club and the Nemean lion skin, personified both physical and moral strength. As for the Egyptians, they represented her as a woman with a strong constitution, having two bull horns on her head and an elephant at her side. Modern artists express her in very different ways. Botticelli sees her as a robust woman, simply seated upon a throne; Rubens gives her a shield with the figure of a lion or has her being followed by a lion. Gravelot shows her crushing vipers, a lion skin thrown on her shoulders, with a laurel branch around her head and holding a sheaf of arrows, while at her feet lie crowns and scepters. Anguier, in a bas-relief on the tomb of Henri Longueville (in the Louvre), makes use, to define Strength, of a lion devouring a boar. Coysevox (on the balustrade of the marble courtyard at Versailles) dresses her in a lion skin and has her carry an oak branch in one hand, and the base of a column in the other. Finally, among the bas-reliefs decorating the peristyle of the St Sulpice Church, Strength is represented armed with a flaming sword and the shield of Faith. In all of these figures and in many others the enumeration of which would be tedious, we cannot find any analogy, with regard to attributes, with that of Michel Colombe and of the sculptors of his time. Because of this, the beautiful statue of the tomb of the Carmes takes on a special value and becomes for us the best translation of esoteric symbolism. We cannot reasonably deny that the tower, so important in medieval fortification, holds a clearly defined meaning, although we have not been able to discover an interpretation for it anywhere. As for the dragon, its double expression is better known, from a moral and religious point of view, it is a translation of evil, the spirit of a demon, a devil, or Satan; for the philosopher and alchemist, it was always used to represent their volatile and dissolving first matter, otherwise called common mercury. Hermetically, we can see the tower as the envelope, the refuge, the protective sanctuary --- mineralogists would coin the term *ganque* or ore-bearing earth --- of the mercurial dragon. It is moreover the meaning of the Greek word [*456-1] (*purgos*), tower, asylum, refuge. The intervention could be even more complete if we identify with the artist the woman who pulls the monster out of its lair and the deadly gesture with the goal which he proposed to endeavor in this difficult and dangerous operation. At least, in this way, we could find a satisfactory and almost true explanation of the allegorical subject used to reveal the esoteric aspect of Strength. But we would have to assume that the secret science to which these attributes refer is known. Our statue itself can teach us both about its symbolic meaning and about the topics related to all that which is Wisdom, represented by the four cardinal virtues. If the great initiate, Francois Rabelais was, had been asked for his opinion, he would certainly have



CATHEDRAL OF NANTES
Tomb of Francis II - Strength (16th Century)

PLATE XXXVI

answered through the voice of Epistemon (2), that the tower of fortification or fortified castle, amounts to saying a feat of strength or a tower of strength (3); and that a feat of strength requires "courage, wisdom, and power: courage because there is danger, wisdom because due knowledge is necessarily required; power, for whoever cannot do it, should not undertake it". On the other hand, the phonetic cabala which makes the French word *tour* (tower) equivalent to the Attic word [*457-1] (*turos*), completes the Pantagrueic meaning if the tower, or feat, of strength (4). As a matter of fact, *turos* is substituted and used for [*457-2] (*to oris*); [*457-3] that, that which, [*457-4] (*oros*) --- goal, term, objective meant to be achieved), thus marking the thing to be attained, the goal set forth. Nothing, it can be seen, could better fit the figurative expression of the stone of the philosophers, a dragon enclosed in its fortress, the extraction of which has always been considered a true feat of strength. On the other hand, the image is revealing; for, while we experience some difficulties understanding how a robust and bulky dragon could have resisted the compression exerted by the walls of its narrow prison, we can no more grasp by what miracle it goes entirely through a mere crack in the masonry. Here again we can recognize a translation of the prodigious, the supernatural and the miraculous. Let us finally point out that Strength bears other marks of the esotericism she reflects. The braids of her hair, hieroglyphs for the solar radiation, indicate that the Work, subjected to the influence of the heavenly body, cannot be performed without the dynamic collaboration of the sun. The braid, in Greek [*457-5] (*seira*), is adopted to represent the vibrational energy, because, among the ancient Hellenic people, the sun was called [*457-6] (*seir*). The regulated scales on the gorget of the corselet are those of a serpent, another emblem of the mercurial subject and replica of the dragon which is also scaly. Fish scales, set in a semi-circle, decorate her abdomen and evoke the joining of the human body of a mermaid's tail. The mermaid, fabulous monster and hermetic symbol, is used to characterize the union of the nascent sulphur, which is our fish, with the common mercury, called virgin, in the philosophical mercury or salt of wisdom. The same meaning is provided by the Twelfth Night cake, to which the Greeks gave the same name as to the Moon, Selena: [*458-1] (*selene*); this word formed from the Greek roots [*458-2] (*selas*), brightness, and [*458-3] (*ele*), solar light, had been chosen by the initiates to show that the philosophical mercury drew its brightness from sulphur just as the moon receives its light from the sun. An analogous reason caused the name [*458-4] (*seiren*), siren to be attributed to the mythical monster resulting from the combination of a woman and a fish; *serein*, a contraction of [*458-5] (*seir*), sun and [*458-6] (*mene*), moon, also indicates the mercurial lunar matter combined with the sulphurous solar substance. Therefore it is a translation identical to that of the Twelfth Night cake, adorned with the sign of light and spirituality: the cross, evidence of the real incarnation of the solar ray, emanating from the universal father, into heavy matter, matrix of all things, and the *terra inanis et vacua* (worthless and empty earth) of the Scriptures.

(1) Leon Palustre: *Les Sculpteurs Français de la Renaissance: Michel Colombe (French Sculptors of the Renaissance: Michel Colombe)* in *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, 2nd issue, vol. 29, May-June 1884.

(2) The Greek word *Epistemon* means learned, one who is instructed, skilled at; the root *epistemai*, to know, to examine, to think.

(3) Translator's Note: A "tour de force" in French means at once a *tower of strength* and a *feat of strength*.

(4) Rabelais' main book, entitled *Pantagruel*, is entirely devoted to the burlesque and cabalistic exposition of alchemical secrets, of which the *pantagrueism* embraces the totality and constitutes the scientific doctrine. Pantagruel is assembled from three Greek words: *panta*, used for *pante*, completely, in an absolute manner; *güe*, path, way; *ele*, solar light. Rabelais' gigantic hero therefore expresses the perfect knowledge of the solar path, that is to say the *universal way*.

BODYGUARDS V

"Wearing a matron headdress with a throat collar" --- so says Dubuisson-Aubenay in his *Itinerary in Brittany*, in 1636 --- Michel Colombe's Temperance is endowed with attributes similar to those given her by Cohin. According to the latter, she is dressed in simple clothes, a bridle with bit in one hand and in the other, the pendulum of a clock or the balance wheel of a watch". Other statues represent her holding a bridle or cup. "She quite often seems", says Noel, "to be leaning on an inverted vase, with a bridle in her hand or mixing wine with water". The elephant, considered the most sober of animals, is her symbol. Ripa gives two of her emblems: one of a woman with a turtle on her head, holding a bridle and silver money; the other of a woman in the act of steeping, with tongs, some red hot iron into a water-filled vase.

In Her left hand our statue holds a case decorated with a weight-driven clock, a customary model of the 16th century. It is shown that the dials of these instruments had only one hand, as is seen in this very beautiful figure of the period. The clock, used to measure time, is taken for the hieroglyph of time itself and looked upon, like the hourglass, as the principal emblem of the old Saturn (**Plate XXXVII**).

Some rather superficial observers thought to recognize a lantern in the clock of Temperance, even though it is quite easy to identify. The mistake would barely modify the deep signification of the symbol, because the meaning of the lantern completes that of the clock. Indeed while the lantern illuminates because it bears light, the clock appears to be the dispenser of this light, which is not received in one sitting, but little by little, progressively, in the course of years and with the help of time. Experience, light, and truth are philosophical synonyms; and nothing, if not age, can allow us to acquire experience, light and truth.

Therefore, such is Time represented, sole master of wisdom, under the appearance of an old man, and philosophers in the old and weary posture of men having worked a long time to obtain it. It is this necessity for time or experience that Francois Rabelais emphasizes in his Appendix to the last chapter of the fifth book of *Pantagrue* when he writes: "Therefore, when you philosophers, God guiding, accompanying them by some clear lantern, will devote themselves to careful research and investigation as is natural to humans (and because of this quality Herodotus and Homer have been called Alphestes ⁽¹⁾, i.e., seekers and inventors) they will find the answer made by the sage Thales of Amasis, king of the Egyptians, to be true, when he was asked which thing contained the most prudence: Time, he said, for through Time have all latent things been invented and through Time they will be; and this is the reason why the ancients called Saturn Time, the father of Truth, and Truth the daughter of Time. They will also without fail recognize all the science, they and their predecessors have acquired, to be but the smallest part of that which is, and which they know not".

But the esoteric scope of Temperance lies entirely in the bridle which she holds in her right hand. It is with the bridle that the horse is driven; by means of this bit, the cavalier directs his mount as he pleases. So the bridle can be considered as the essential instrument, the mediator placed between the will of the cavalier and the progress of the horse, toward the proposed objective. This means, of which he image has been chosen among the constituent parts of the harness, is designated in hermeticism by the name of cabala. So that the special expression of the bridle, that of restraint and of direction, allowone to identify and recognize, under a single symbolic form, Temperance and the Cabalistic Science.



CATHEDRAL OF NANTES
Tomb of Francis II - Temperance (16th Century)

PLATE XXXVII

About this science, a remark is called for which, we believe, is all the more founded because the uninformed student tends to confuse the hermetic cabala to the system of allegorical interpretation which the Jews claim to have received through tradition and which they call Kabbala. In fact, the two terms have nothing in common, save their pronunciation. The Hebrew Kabbala is only concerned with the Bible; it is therefore strictly limited to sacred exegesis and hermeneutics. Hermetic cabala concerns books, texts and documents of the esoteric sciences of Antiquity, of the Middle Ages and of modern times. While the Hebraic kabbala is but a process based on the decomposition and explanation of each word or letter, the hermetic cabala on the contrary is a genuine language. And as the great majority of didactic treatises of ancient sciences are written in cabala or as they use this language in their essential passages; as the Great Art itself, on Artephius' own confession, is completely cabalistic, the reader cannot understand any of it if he does not possess at least the first elements of the secret idiom. In the Hebrew kabbala, three meanings can be discovered in each sacred word, hence there are three different interpretations of kabbalas. The first, called Gematria involves the analysis of the numeric or arithmetic value of the letters composing the word; the second, called Notarikon, establishes the meaning of each letter considered separately; the third, Temura (variation, permutation) uses certain transpositions of letters. This last system, which seems to have been the oldest, dates from the time when the Alexandrian school flourished, and was created by some Jewish philosophers anxious to accommodate the Greek and Oriental philosophical speculations with the text of sacred books. We would not be particularly surprised if the fatherhood of this method was due to the Jew Philo, whose reputation was great at the beginning of our era because he is the first philosopher mentioned as having attempted to identify a true religion with philosophy. It is known that he tried to reconcile the writings of Plato with the Hebrew texts by interpreting the latter allegorically, which agrees perfectly with objective pursued by the Hebrew kabbala. Be that as it may, according to the works of very serious authors, we cannot assign to the Jewish system a date much earlier than the Christian era even by moving back the point of departure of this interpretation to the Greek Septuagint (238 BC). The hermetic cabala however was used long before that period by the Pythagoreans and the disciples of Thales of Miletis (640-560 BC), founder of the Ionian school: Anaximander, Pherecyde of Syros, Anaximene of Miletis, Heraclitus of Ephesus, Anaxagoras of Clazomene, etc., in a word, by all the philosophers and Greek savants, as the Papyrus of Leyden testifies.

What is also generally unknown is that the cabala contained and preserved the essential part of the mother tongue of the Pelasgians, a deformed, albeit not destroyed, language, within primitive Greek; it is the root language of Western idioms and particularly of French, whose Pelasgian origin is undeniably verified; an admirable language, of which it suffices to know a few smatterings to easily rediscover, in the different European dialects, the real meaning, altered by time and by the migrations of peoples, from the original language.

Conversely, to Jewish kabbala, created out of nothing so as to veil, doubtlessly, that which the sacred text showed too clearly, hermetic cabala is a precious key allowing whoever possesses it to open the doors of the sanctuaries, of these closed books which are the works of traditional science, to extract their spirit, to see their secret meaning. Known to Jesus and his apostles (it unfortunately caused St Peter's first denial), the cabal was used in the Middle Ages by philosophers, scientists, men of letters, and diplomats. Knights belonging to Orders and knights-errant, troubadours, trouveres, and minstrels, traveling students of the famous school of magic at Salamanc, who we call Venusbergs because they were said to come from the mountain of Venus, discussed among themselves in the language of the gods, also called the gay science or gay knowledge, our hermetic cabala ⁽²⁾. Furthermore, it bears the name and the spirit of Chivalry, the true name of which was revealed to us by Dante's mystical book.

The Latin word *Caballus* and the Greek word [*464-1] (*kaballes*), both mean pack-horse; our cabala truly carries a considerable weight, the "pack" and sum total of ancient knowledge and of medieval chivalry or cabalery or cabala⁽³⁾, the heavy baggage of esoteric truth transmitted by its intermediary throughout the ages. It was the secret language of "cabaliers", horsemen, and cavaliers. The initiates and intellectuals of Antiquity knew it. The ones and the others, so as to reach fullness of knowledge, metaphorically rode the "cavale" (the mare), the horse, spiritual vehicle whose typical image is that of Pegasus, the winged horse of the Greek poets. It alone gave the chosen one access to unknown regions, and offered them the possibility to see all and know all throughout space and time, ether and life. Pegasus, in Greek [*464-2] (*pegasos*), takes its name from the word [*464-3] (*pege*), source, or spring, because it is said that it caused the fountain of Hippocrene to spring out with one kick; but the truth is of another nature. It is because the cabala provides the cause, gives the principle, reveals the source of sciences that its hieroglyphic animal received the special and characteristic name it now bears. To know the cabala is to speak the language of Pegasus, the language of the horse, of which Twist expressively indicates, in one of his allegorical Travels, the effective value and the esoteric power.

Mysterious language of the philosophers and disciples of Hermes, the cabala dominates the entire didactics of the Great Art, just as symbolism embraces all its iconography. Art and literature thus offer to the hidden science the added support of their own resources and their expressive faculties. Actually, and in spite of their specific characteristics and their separate techniques, the cabala and symbolism use different paths to reach the same goal and to merge into the same teaching. They are the two master pillars erected on the corner stones of the philosophical foundation, which support the alchemical fronton of the temple of wisdom.

All idioms can give refuge to the traditional meaning of the cabalistic words, because the cabala, deprived of texture and syntax, easily adapts itself to any language, without altering its special genius. It brings to the different natural languages the substances of its thought with the original meaning of the names and of the qualities. So that any language always remains likely to carry it, to incorporate it, and consequently to become cabalistic by the double meanings which it takes on as a result.

Apart from its pure alchemical role, the cabala was used in the elaboration of several literary masterpieces, which many dilettantes can appreciate, without however guessing what treasures they hide under the attractiveness, the charm, the nobleness of style. This is because the authors --- whether they are named Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Plato, Dante, or Goethe --- were all great initiates. They wrote their immortal works not so much to leave to posterity imperishable monuments of the human genius, but rather to instruct it in the sublime knowledge of which they were the depositories and which they had to transmit in their entirety. We should judge in that way, apart from the already quoted masters, the marvelous artisans of chivalrous poems, jests, etc. belonging to the cycle of the Round Table and of the Grail; the works of Francois Rabelais and the ones by De Cyrano Bergerac; *Don Quixote* by Miquel Cervantes; *Gulliver's Travels* by Swift; the Dream of Polyphilus by Francisco Colonna; the *Tales of Mother Goose* by Perrault; the *Songs of the King of Navarre* by Thibault de Champagne; *The Devil as a Predecessor*, a curious Spanish book of which we do not know the author, and many other books which, albeit less famous, are not lesser in interest nor in knowledge.

We will limit at this point our account of the solar cabala, as we received no permission to give a complete treatise of it, nor to teach its rule. It was enough to point out the important position it occupies in the study of the "secrets of nature", and the necessity for the beginner

to find its key. But, in order for it to be useful to him as much as possible, we will give, as an example, the version in a clear language of an original cabalistic text of Naxagoras⁽⁴⁾. Let us hope that the son of science discovers there the manner to interpret the sealed books, and knows how to take advantage of such a little veiled teaching. In his allegory, the Adept strove to describe the ancient and simple path, the only one which once upon a time the old alchemical masters used to follow.

([A] --- *English Translation of the French Translation done in the 18th century from the original German text of Naxagoras*)

Very Detailed Description of the Golden Sand found near Zwickau, in Misnia near Niederhohendorff, and other neighboring places by J.N.V.E.J.E. ac 5 Pct. ALC. 1715.

([B] --- *English Translation of the French Version, in clear language, of Naxagoras' cabalistic text*)

Very Detailed Description of the manner of extracting, and releasing, the Spirit from Gold, enclosed in the vile mineral matter, so as to build the sacred temple of Light⁽⁵⁾ and to discover other analogous secrets by J.N.V.E.J.E. containing 5 points of Alchemy, 1715.

[A] --- Almost two years ago, a man from these mines obtained from a third person a small extract of a manuscript in quarto, about an inch thick, which came furthermore from two Italian travelers who are also named therein.

[B] --- It is almost two years since a worker skilled in the metallic art obtained through a third agent⁽⁶⁾, an extract of the four elements, manually obtained by assembling two mercuries of the same origin which their excellence caused to be called Roman, and which were always named that way.

[A] --- This extract was thoroughly examined by M.N.N. already a long time ago, because the latter intended to do a lot of work using a divining rod. He finally succeeded in touching that which he was looking for. Here is the extract from this manuscript:

[B] By means of this extract known from Antiquity and well studied by the Moderns, great things can be achieved, provided one has received illumination from the Holy Ghost. It is then that one succeeds in touching with one's hands what one is looking for. Here is the manual technique for this extract:

[A] --- I. A borough called Hartsmanngrun, near Zwickau. Under the borough, many good grains. The mine there is in lodes.

[B] --- I. A scoria surfaces above the combination, formed in fire, of the pure parts of the vile mineral matter, Under the scoria, a friable, granulous water can be found. It is the lode of the metallic ore.

[A] --- II. Kohl-Stein, near Zwickau,. There is a good lode of lead grits and marcasite. Further away, in Gabel, there is a smith called Morgen-Stern who knows where there is a good mine and underground tunnel into which crevices were dug. In it are yellow settings where the metal is malleable.

[B] --- Such is the Stone Kohl ⁽⁷⁾, concretion of the pure parts of the manure or the vile mineral Matter. It is a friable and granulous lode which is born from iron, tin, and lead. It alone bears the imprint of the solar Ray. It is the expert artisan in the art of steel-work. The sages call it the Morning Star. It knows what the artist is looking for, It is the underground path which leads to the yellow, malleable and pure gold. A difficult path cut with crevices and filled with obstacles.

[A] --- III. When going from Schneeberg to the castle called Wissembourg, some water comes out of it towards the mountain; it falls into the Mulde. By walking in the Mulde, facing this water, there is a fish pond close to the river, and beyond this fish pond, there is a little bit of water where some marcasite can be found which will be worth all the trouble that we took going there.

[B] --- Having this stone, called the Mount of the Plyers ⁽⁸⁾, climb towards the White Fortress. It is the living water which falls from the disaggregated body into an impalpable powder under the effect of a natural trituration, comparable to that of a Grinding stone, This living and white water agglomerated in the center into a crystalline stone, of a color similar to whitened iron, and it is greatly worth the effort spent on the operation.

[A] --- IV. At Kauner-Zehl, on the Gott Mountain, two leagues from Schoneck, there is an excellent sand of copper.

[B] --- IV. This luminous and crystalline salt, first being of the Divine Body, in a second stage, will form a s a coppery glass. It is our copper or brass, and the green lion.

[A] --- V. At Grals, near Vooigtland, below Schloss-berg, is a garden where there is a rich gold mine as I have remarked a little while ago. Take good note of this.

[B] This calcined sand will give the golden bough its tinct. The young sprouting of the sun will be born in the Land of fire. It is the burnt substance of the stone, the closed rock of the garden ⁽⁹⁾ where our golden fruit ripens, as I found out recently. Take good note of this.

[A] --- VI. Between Werda and Laugenberndorff, there is a fish pond which is called Mansteich. Below this fish pond, an old fountain can be seen, on the lower part of the meadow. In this fountain, very good gold grains can be found.

[B] --- VI. Between this product and the second one which is stronger and better, it is useful to go back to the Pond of Dead Light ⁽¹⁰⁾, though the extract that has been put back into its original matter, You will then find the living water dilated and without consistency. That which will come out of it is the Ancient Fountain ⁽¹¹⁾, generating vigor, and capable of changing vile metals into gold grains.

[A] --- VII. In the woods of Werds, there is a ditch, which is called the Langgrab. By going above this ditch you can find in the ditch itself, a pit. Going inside this pit, for the length of an alder, towards the mountain, you will find a gold lode of the length of a span.

[B] --- VII. In the Green Forest, is hidden the strong, the robust and the best of all ⁽¹²⁾. There is also the pond of the Crayfish ⁽¹³⁾. Follow it: the substance will separate by itself. Leave the trench: its source is at the bottom of a cave where the stone is growing inside the ore-bearing layer.

[A] --- VIII. At Hundes-Hubel, there is a pit in which there are massive amounts of gold grains. This pit is in the village near a fountain where the people go to get water to drink.

[B] --- VIII. During the augmenting stage, by reiterating, you will see the source filled with brilliant, pure gold granulations. It is in the scoria, or in the matrix, enclosing the Fountain of dry water, creator of gold, which the metallic people avidly drink.

[A] --- IX. After having made several trips to Zwickau, to the small town of Schlott, to Saume, to Crouzoll, we stopped at Brethmullen, where this place used to be located. On the path, which once upon a time led to Weinberg, and is called Barenstein, facing or towards the mountain, in the direction of Barendstein, arriving from the back, and facing the setting sun, to the fibula, which was there once upon a time, there is an old well through which a lode is passing. It is strong and quite rich in good gold from Hungary and sometimes even in gold from Arabia. The mark of the lode is on four of the separators of metals "Auff-seigers vier", and it is written near "Auff-seigers eins". It is a true mother lode.

[B] --- After several experiments on the vile mineral matter, until the yellow color, or the fixation of the body, and from there to the crowned Sun, we had to wait until the matte had entirely cooked in water, according to the old method. This long coction, observed in bygone days, leads to the luminous Castle or the brilliant Fortress, which is this heavy stone, the occident reached, albeit not gone beyond, by our appropriate manner⁽¹⁴⁾. For the truth comes out of the old well of this powerful tincture, rich in gold seeds as pure as the gold of Hungary and sometimes as Arabian gold. The sign, formed of four rays, indicates and seals the mineral reducer. It is the greatest of all tinctures. In order to close, on a less austere note, this study of the secret language designated under the name of hermetic or solar cabala, we will show how far historic credulity can go, when a blind ignorance prompts us to attribute to certain individuals that which only belonged to allegory and legend. The historic facts which we offer to the meditation of the reader are those of a monarch in Roman antiquity. We will not have to remark on their bizarre characteristics, not to underline the cabalistic relations, as they are so evident and expressive. The famous Roman emperor Vavus Avitus Bassianus, greeted by soldiers, --- no one really knew why --- with the names of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus⁽¹⁵⁾, was nicknamed --- no one really knows why either --- Elagabalus or Heliogabalus⁽¹⁶⁾. "Born in 204", says the Encyclopedia, "and died in Rome in 222; he came from a Syrian family⁽¹⁷⁾ dedicated to the cult of the Sun at Emesa⁽¹⁸⁾. He himself, when very young, was a high priest of this god, who was adored in the shape of a black stone⁽¹⁹⁾ and under the name of Elagabalus. He was supposed to be son of Caracalla. His mother, Saemias⁽²⁰⁾ was part of the court and was below calumny. Be that as it may, the beauty of the young high priest was seduced to the legion of Emeses who proclaimed him August emperor at the age of fourteen. The emperor Macrinus marched against him, but was beaten and killed.

"Heliogabalus' reign was nothing save the triumph of Eastern superstitions and debaucheries. There are no infamies or cruelties which were not invented by this singular emperor with rouged cheeks, and a trailing robe. He brought his black stone to Rome, and forced the Senate and all the people to adore it publicly. Having removed from Carthage the statue of Coelestis, which represents the Moon, he celebrated with great ceremony, its marriage to his black stone which represented the Sun. He created a senate of women, married successively four women, among whom a vestal virgin, and assembled one day in his palace all the prostitutes of Rome to whom he addressed a discourse on the duties of their estate. Praetorians slaughtered Heliogabalus and threw his body into the Tiber River. He was 18 years old and had been emperor for four years".

While this may not be History, it is nevertheless a beautiful story, full of Pantagruelism, Without failing its esoteric mission, it certainly would have, under Rabelais' brisk pen and warm and colorful style, gained in flavor, vividness and truculence.

(1) In Greek, [*462-1] (*alphester*) or [*463-2] (*alphestes*) means inventor, industrious, from [*462-3] (*alphe*) discovery, which has given the verb [*462-4] (*alphano*), to invent, to find through seeking.

(2) These traveling students wore about the neck, as a sign of recognition and affiliation, a yellow thread of knitted wool or silk, to which the *Liber Vagaborum* (*Book of Wanderings*) published around 1510, and attributed to Th. Murner or Sebastian Brant, and the *Schimpf und Ernst* (*Ignominy and Seriousness*), dated 1519, bear witness.

(3) Translator's Note: There is a cabalistic pun here. The French chevalier (knight), and cavalier (rider, horsemen) are very close. The author invents the term cabalier which has also a pronunciation very close to the other two, to indicate one practicing hermetic cabala. The three words sound very similar in French.

(4) This opusculé is inserted at the end of Naxagoras' treatise, called *Alchymia Denudate* (*Alchemy Unveiled*). We translated it according to a French manuscript, translated from a German original.

(5) The sacred Temple of Light is the name given to the philosophers' stone ---our microcosm, in relationship to the temple of Jerusalem, the image of the universe or of the macrocosm

(6) The secret fire.

(7) Kohl-Stein (Coal Stone in German was translated as Stone Kohl in French). Also called Al-khol, Alcohol, eau-de-vie of the Sages; it is the Fire Stone of Basil Valentine.

(8) Because of its signature; plyers in Greek is said [*467-1] (*labis*) from [*467-2] (*lanbano*), meaning to obtain, to collect, and also to conceive and to become pregnant.

(9) The Garden of Hesperides.

(10) The Fountain of Youth, first the Universal medicine, then the Projection Powder.

(11) ditto.

(12) See The Cosmopolite. The King of the Art is hidden "in the green forest of the nymph Venus".

(13) Constellation of the Zodiac of the Philosophers, sign of the increase of fire.

(14) Graphic symbol of the philosophical vitriol, The points of suspension are part of the original text.

(15) Cabalistically, the combination of the first matter, of the Olympian or divine gold, and of the mercury. The latter, in the allegorical accounts, always bears the name of Antony, Antonin, Antolin, etc, with the epithet of pilgrim, messenger, or traveler.

(16) It means the Horse of the Sun, the one which carries the science, the solar cabala.

(17) [*469-1] (*suria*) or [*469-2] (*sisura*), means a coarse skin covered with hair, the future golden fleece.

(18) [*469-3] (*Emesis*) means vomiting; it is the scoria of the previous text.

(19) The Stone of the Philosophers, the first matter, subject of the art drawn from the original chaos, of black color, but primum ens, formed by nature, of the philosophers' stone.

(20) A few historians called her Seriamira --- half miraculous. At once vile and precious, abject and sought after, she is the prostitute of the Work. Wisdom caused her to say about herself: *Nigra sum sed formosa* (I am black but I am beautiful).

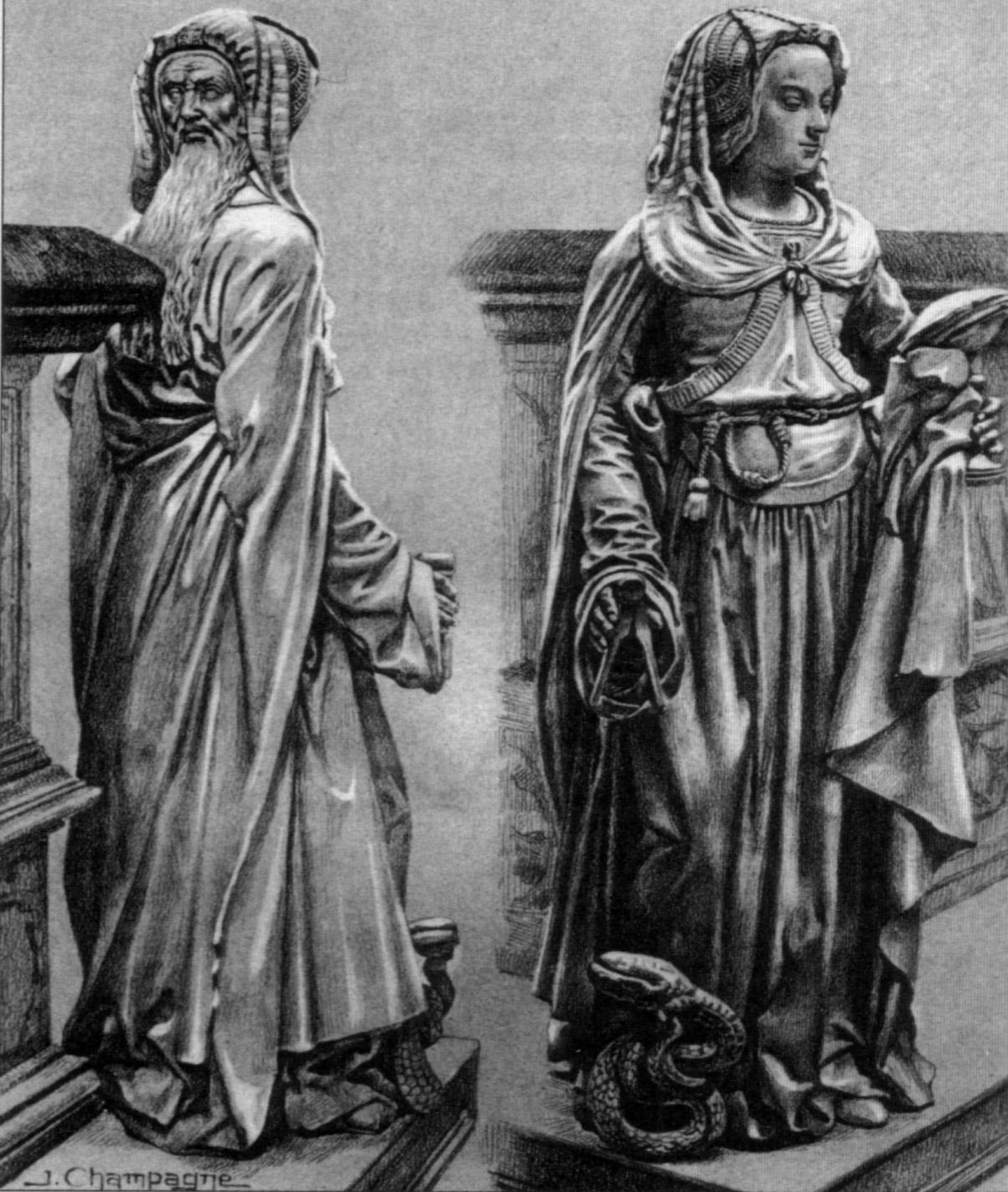
BODYGUARDS VI

Before begin raised to the dignity of a cardinal virtue, Prudence was for a long time an allegorical divinity to which the Ancients gave a two-faced head --- a formula exactly reproduced by our statue and in the most successful fashion. Her front face offers the features of a young woman with very pure lines, and the back face is that of an old man, whose features full of nobility and gravity, continue into the silky waves of a river-like beard. Replica of Janus, the son of Apollo and of the nymph Creusa, this admirable figure is in no way inferior to the three others in majesty or interest.

Standing up, she is represented with her shoulders covered with the ample mantle of the philosopher, which opens widely on a blouse with a marked herring-bone pattern. A simple shawl protects the nape of her neck; arranged as a headpiece around the old face, it is tied in the front, thus showing the neck ornamented with a pearl necklace. The wide-pleated skirt is maintained by a heavy tasseled girdle but of a rather monastic character. Her left hand surrounds the handle of a convex mirror in which she seems to enjoy seeing herself, while her right hand maintains the two branches of a dry compass spread apart. A snake, whose body seems to be coiled upon itself, is lying at her feet (**Plate XXXVIII**).

This noble figure is for us a moving and suggestive personification of the simple, fertile, multiple and diversified Nature under the harmonious outer appearance, the elegance and the perfection of the forms with which it ornaments its most humble productions. Her mirror, which is that of Truth was always considered by the classical authors as the hieroglyph for the universal matter, and in particular was recognized among them as a sign of the very substance of the Great Work. Subject of the Sages, Mirror of the Art are hermetic synonyms which veil from common men the true name of the secret mineral. It is in this mirror, say the masters, that man can see nature unveiled. Thanks to this mirror, he can know the ancient truth in its traditional realism. For nature never shows herself to the seeker, but only through the intermediary of this mirror which holds its reflected image. And to explicitly show that it is indeed our microcosm and the little world of sapience, the sculptor fashioned the mirror as a plano-convex lens, which has the property of reducing forms while maintaining their respective proportions. The indication of the hermetic subject, containing in its volume all that which the vast universe encloses, consequently seems deliberately premeditated, imposed by an imperious esoteric necessity, the interpretation of which is not questionable. So that by patiently studying this unique and primitive substance, chaotic fragment, and reflection of the great world, the artist can acquire the elementary notions of an unknown science, penetrate an unexplored sphere, prolific in discoveries, abundant in revelations, lavish in marvels, and finally receive the invaluable gift that God reserves for elite souls: the light of wisdom.

And so, under the outer veil of Prudence, appears the mysterious image of old alchemy, and so are we initiated, by the attributes of the former, into the secrets of the latter. Further, the practical symbolism of our science is concentrated in the presentation of a formula containing two terms, two essentially philosophical virtues: prudence and simplicity. Prudentia and Simplicitas, such was the favorite motto of the masters Basil Valentine and Senior Zadith. As a matter of fact, one of the woodcuts of the treatise on Azoth represents, at the feet of Atlas and supporting the cosmic sphere, a bust of Janus --- Prudentia --- and a young child spelling the alphabet --- Simplicitas. But, while simplicity above all belongs to nature, as the first and foremost of her prerogatives, man, on the other hand, seems gifted with the qualities grouped under the general denomination of prudence: foresight, circumspection, intelligence, sagacity,



CATHEDRAL OF NANTES
Tomb of Francis II - Prudence - Two Views (16th Century)

PLATE XXXVIII

experience, etc. And although all demand, in order to reach their perfection, the help and the support of time, the ones being innate and the others acquired, it would be possible to provide, in this sense, a likely reason for the double mask of Prudence.

The truth, less abstract, seems more closely bound to the alchemical positivism of the attributes of our cardinal Virtue. It is generally recommended to "unite a healthy and vigorous old man with a young and beautiful virgin". If this chemical wedding, a metallic child must be born and receive the qualifier of androgynous, because it partakes both of the nature of sulphur, its father, and of that of mercury, its mother. But there is in this place a secret that we have not discovered among the best and the most sincere authors. The operation, thus presented, seems simple and quite natural. Yet, we find ourselves blocked for several years, in the impossibility of getting anything out of it. It is because the philosophers skillfully welded two successive works into one, with all the more ease because they are similar operations leading to parallel results. When the sages speak of their androgynous one, they mean to indicate by this word the compound artificially formed from sulphur and mercury, put into close contact, or according to the hallowed chemical expression, simply combined. This therefore indicates preliminary possession of a sulphur already isolated or extracted, and not of a body directly generated by nature, after the conjunction of the old man and the young virgin. That is why we are taking all the opportunities afforded us to speak of the beginning, preferably at the end of the Work. In this, we are following Basil Valentine's authorized advice when he says that: "whoever possesses the matter will always find the pot to cook it in, and whoever possesses flour should have no concern about being able to make bread". Now, elementary logic leads us to research the parents of sulphur and mercury if we want to obtain, by their union, the philosophical androgynous one, also called Rebis, Compositum de composites, animated Mercury, etc., the very matter of the Elixir. Of these chemical parents of the sulphur and mercury principles, one always remains the same, and that is the virgin mother; as for the old man he must, once his role is complete, give his place the one who is younger than he. And so these two conjunctions will each engender a child of different sex: the sulfur, of dry and igneous complexion, and the mercury of a "lymphatic and melancholic temperament". This is what Philalethes and d'Espagnet want to teach when they say that "our virgin can be married twice without losing anything of her virginity". Others express themselves in a very obscure manner and are content to assert that "the sun and the moon of the sky are not the heavenly bodies of the philosophers". Whereby it must be understood that the artist will never find the partners of the stone, directly prepared in nature, and that he will have to form first the hermetic sun and moon, if he does not want to be deprived of the precious fruit resulting from their union. We believe we said enough on the topic. Few words suffice for the wise, and those who have worked for a long time will know to take advantage of our opinions. We write for all, but all cannot be called to understand us, because it is forbidden for us to speak more openly.

Coiled upon itself, its head tilted backwards in the spasms of agony, the snake, which we see represented at the foot of our statue, is said to be one of the attributes of Prudence; it is also said to be of a rather circumspect nature. We do not dispute this; but it can be agreed that this reptile, represented dying, must be so for the sake of symbolism, for its inertia does not allow it to exercise such a faculty. It is therefore reasonable to believe that the emblem has another meaning, quite different from the one usually afforded to it. In hermeticism, its meaning is analogous to that of the dragon, which the sages adopted as one of the representatives of mercury. Let us recall Flamel's crucified snake, the one in Notre-Dame de Paris, those on the caduceus, the one on the meditation crucifix (which emerges out of a human skull serving as a base for the divine cross), the Aesculapian snake, the Greek Ouroboros --- the serpent devouring its tail, *serpens qui caudam devoravit* --- in charge of translating the closed circuit

o the little universe which is the Work, etc. Now, all these reptiles are dead or moribund, starting with the ouroboros devouring itself, to those of the caduceus, killed with the blow of a stick, not forgetting Eve's Tempter, whose head shall be bruised by her seed (Gen. 3:15). They all express the same idea, all contain the same doctrine, obey the same tradition. And the snake, the hieroglyph for the primordial alchemical principle, can justify the assertion of the sages, who affirm that all they are looking for is contained in the mercury. It is truly the mercury which is the motor, the animator of the great work, because it starts it, maintains it, perfects it, and completes it. It is it, the mystical circle of which the sulphur, the embryo of mercury, marks the central point, around which it accomplishes its rotation, thus drawing the graphic sign of the sun, the father of light, of the spirit, and of gold, the dispenser of all the earthly goods.

But while the dragon represents the scaly and volatile mercury, the product of the superficial purification of the subject, the snake, deprived of wings, remains the hieroglyph for the common, pure and cleansed mercury, extracted from the body of Magnesia, or first matter. This is the reason why certain allegorical statues of Prudence have as an attribute the snake fixed on a mirror. And this mirror, signature of the dross mineral provided by nature, becomes luminous while reflecting the light, that is while manifesting its vitality in the snake, or in mercury, which it held hidden under its coarse envelope. Thus, thanks to this primitive living and vivifying agent, it becomes possible to give back its life to the sulfur of dead metals. By performing the operation, the mercury, dissolving the metal, takes hold of the sulfur, animates it, dies and yields to it its own vitality. This is what the masters mean to teach when they command to kill the living in order to resurrect the dead, to corporify the spirits and to reanimate the corporifications. When in possession of this living and active sulfur, said to be philosophical so as to mark its regeneration, it will suffice to unite it, in the proper ratio, to the same living mercury, in order to obtain by the interpenetration of these living principles, the philosophical or animated mercury, the matter of the philosophers' stone. If that which we have tried to translate above has been well understood, and if that which is said here is compared to it, the first two doors of the Work will be easily opened.

As a summary, whoever possesses an extended knowledge of the practice will notice that the main secret of the Work resides in the artifice of the dissolution. And as it is necessary to perform several of these operations --- different as to their goals, similar as to their technique -- there are many secondary secrets which, properly speaking, truly only constitute one. All the art is then reduced to dissolution, everything depends on it and the manner in which it is performed. This is the *secretum secretorum* (secret of secrets), the key of the Magistry, hidden under the enigmatic axiom *solve et coagula*: dissolve the body) and coagulate (the spirit). This can be done in one operation including two dissolutions, one violent, dangerous, and unknown, the other easy, comfortable, and often performed in a laboratory.

Having described the first of these dissolutions elsewhere and having given, in an allegorical, albeit slightly veiled style, the essential details, we shall not dwell on the subject any longer (1). But so as to specify its characteristics, we will draw the worker's attention to that which distinguishes it from chemical operations falling into the same denomination. This indication should be quite useful.

We have said, and we repeat, that the purpose of the philosophical dissolution is to obtain the sulphur which, in the Magistry, plays the role of a forming agent by coagulating mercury which is in turn added to it, a property which it owes to its ardent, igneous, and dessicating nature. "Every dry thing avidly drinks its own humidity", says an old alchemical axiom. But this sulfur, during its first extraction, is never stripped of the metallic mercury with which it

constitutes the central core of the metal, called essence or seed. Hence the sulphur, preserving the specific qualities of the dissolved body, is in reality by the purest and most subtle part of this very body. Consequently, we are entitled to consider, with the greatest number of masters, that the philosophical dissolution achieves the absolute purification of imperfect metals. There are no examples, whether spagyric or chemical, of an operation likely to give such a result. All the purifications of metals treated by modern methods are only used to rid the metals of the superficial, less tenacious impurities. And these, brought from the mine or coming along during the contrary, the alchemical process, dissociating and destroying the mass of heterogeneous matters fixed on the core, composed of very pure sulfur and mercury, ruins the greatest part of the body and makes it resist any ulterior reduction. Thus, for instance, a kilogram of excellent iron of Sweden, or electrolytic iron, provides a proportion of radical metal, of a perfect homogeneity and purity, that varies between 7.24 and 7.32 grams. This very bright body is endowed with a magnificent purple coloration --- which is the color of pure iron --- analogous to the iodine vapors in terms of its brightness and intensity. It should be noticed that the sulfur of iron, once isolated, being incarnate red, and mercury being of a light blue color, the purple resulting from their combination, reveals the totality of the metal. Subjected to the philosophical dissolution, silver abandons few impurities, in relation to its volume, and yields a yellow colored body almost as beautiful as that of gold, though it does not possess its strong density. Already, and we have taught it at the beginning of this book, the simple chemical dissolution of silver in nitric acid detaches from the metal a minimal fraction of pure silver, of a golden color, which is enough to prove the possibility of a more energetic action and the certainty of the result which can be expected.

No one could contest the significance and the preponderance of the dissolution, in chemistry as well as in alchemy. It is in the first rank of laboratory operations, and it can be said that most chemical works depend on it. In alchemy, the entire work only consists in a succession of diverse solutions. Consequently we cannot be surprised by the answer provided by the Spirit of Mercury to Brother Albert in a dialogue by Basil Valentine given in his book *The Twelve Keys*: "How could I have this body?", asks Albert, and the Spirit answers: "Through dissolution". Whatever the path used, wet or dry, the dissolution is absolutely necessary. What is fusion, if not a solution of the metal in its own water? Similarly inquartation, as well as the production of metallic alloys, are true chemical solutions of metals, ones into others. Mercury, liquid at room temperature, is nothing but a molten or dissolved metal. All the distillations, extractions, purifications, require a previous solution, and are only performed after the completion of the first. What about reduction? Is it not also the result of two successive solutions, that of the body and that of a reducing agent? If you dip a sliver of zinc in a first solution of gold trichloride, a second solution begins right away: that of zinc, and the gold, reduced, is precipitated as an amorphous powder. The cupellation also demonstrates the necessity of the first solution --- that of the precious metal as an alloy of, or impure form with, lead, while a second solution, the fusion of superficial oxides which have been formed, eliminates them and completes the operation. As for the clearly alchemical, special operations --- imbibition, digestion, maturation, circulation, putrefaction, etc. --- they depend upon a former solution and represent as many different aspects of one and the same cause.

But what distinguishes the philosophical solution from all other ones, and provides it, to say the least, with a true originality, is that the solvent does not assimilate itself to the basic metal which is presented to it; it only separates its molecules, by breaking their cohesion, takes hold of the fragments of pure sulfur which they can retain and leave the residue, formed by the greater part of the inert, disaggregated, sterile and completely irreducible body. We could not then obtain a metallic salt from it, as it is done with the help of chemical aids. Furthermore, the philosophical solvent, known since antiquity, has only been used in alchemy by operators

expert in a special twist of hand required for its use. It is the latter that the sages talk about when they say that the Work is accomplished by only one thing. Contrary to the chemists and spagyrist, who have a collection of various acids at their disposal, the alchemists only possess a single agent which received many names, of which the latest is Alkahest. To note the compositions of simple or complex liquors called Alkahest, would take us too far, for each chemist of the of the 17th and 18th centuries had his own formula. Among the best artists who have seriously studied the mysterious solvent of Jean-Baptiste Van Helmont and of Paracelsus, we will only mention: Thomson (*Epilogismi Chimici*, Leyden, 1673); Welling (*Opera Cabalistica*, Hamburg, 1735); Tackenius (*Hippocrates Chemicus*, Venice, 1666); Digby (*Secreta Medica*, Frankfurt, 1676); Starkey (*Pyrotechnia*, Rouen, 1706); Vigani (*Medulla Chemiae*, Danzig, 1682); Christian Langius (*Opera Omnia*, Frankfurt, 1688); Langelot (Salamander, vid. Tilleman, Hamburg, 1673); Helbigius (*Introitus ad Physicum Inauditam*, Hamburg, 1680); Frederic Hoffman (*De Acido et Viscido*, Frankfurt, 1689); Baron Schroeder (*Pharmacopoea*, Lyons, 1649); Blanckard (*Theatrum Chemicum*, Leipzig, 1700); Quercetanus (*Hermes Medicinalis*, Paris, 1604); Beguin (*Elements de Chymie*, Paris, 1615); J.F. Henckel (*Flora Saturnisans*, Paris, 1760).

Pott, one of Stahl's students, also mentions a solvent, which, judging by its properties, would lead us to believe in its alchemical reality, if we did not know its true nature better. The way our chemist describes it; the care with which he keeps its composition secret; the intended generalization of qualities which he usually strives to specify, would tend to prove it. "What is left now", he says, "is to speak of an oily and anonymous solvent, of which no chemists I know made a clear mention ⁽²⁾. It is the limpid, volatile, oily, inflammable liquor, like the spirit of wine, acid like a good vinegar, and which goes over during distillation in the form of cloudy flakes. This liquor, after it has been digested and cohobated on the metals, and above all after they themselves have been calcined, dissolves most of them; it extracts a very red tincture out of gold, and when it is taken off the surface of the gold, a resinous matter remains, that it entirely soluble in the spirit of wine, which by that acquires a beautiful red color. The residue is totally irreducible, and I am convinced that salt of gold could be prepared from it. This solvent combines itself equally with aqueous or fatty liquors. It converts corals into a sea-green liquor, which seems to be their first state. It is a liquor saturated with sal ammoniac and yet greasy at the same time, and to say what I really think about it, it is the genuine menstruum of Weidenfeld, or the wine spirit of the philosophers, since the white and red wines of Raymond Lully can be extracted from this same matter. This is what causes Henry Khunrath to give his Lunar components the name of fire-water, and water-fire, in the Ampitheatrum, because it was certain that Junchken was seriously mistaken when he attempted to convince us that it is in the spirit of wine that one must look for the anonymous solvent, of which we speak. This solvent yields a curious spirit of urine, which seems in some instances to be entirely different from regular urine spirits. It also yields a kind of butter which has the consistency and whiteness of antimony butter. It is extremely bitter and of an average volatility. Both these products are very appropriate, the one like the other, to extract metals. The preparation of our solvent, although obscure and hidden is, nevertheless, very easy to make. But since I have known it and worked on it a very short time, I will be excused from not saying more about this matter; I still have a great number of experiments to perform before I can ascertain all of its properties. Besides, without speaking of Weidenfeld's *De Secretis Adeptorum*, Dickenson seems to have discovered this menstruum in his treatise entitled *Chrysopoeia*".

Without contesting Pott's probity or the veracity of his description, and even less the description Weidenfeld gives under cabalistic terms, it is unquestionable that the solvent of which Pott speaks is not that of the Sages. Indeed, the chemical character of its reactions and

the liquid state in which it is presented over-abundantly testifies to this fact. Those who are learned in the qualities of the subject know that the universal solvent is a true mineral of dry and fibrous appearance, of solid and hard consistency and of crystalline texture. Therefore it is a salt and not a liquid or a flowing mercury, but a stone or a stony salt, hence its hermetic qualifiers of Saltpeter (sal petri, salt of stone), of salt of wisdom, or salt alembroth --- which certain chemists believe to be the product of the simultaneous sublimation of mercury deuto-bichloride and ammonium chloride. And this is enough to discount Pott's solvent as being too removed from the metallic nature to be used to the best advantage in the work of the Magistry. Furthermore, if our author had kept the fundamental principle of the art in mind, he would have refrained from assimilating his particular liquor with the universal solvent. This principle indeed affirms that: Within the metals, through the metals, with the metals, can the metals be perfected. Whosoever strays from this primary truth, will never discover anything useful for the transmutation. Consequently, while the metal, according to the philosophical teaching and to the traditional doctrine, must first be dissolved, this must only be done with a metallic solvent, which will be appropriate for it and by nature very close to it. Only similars can act upon similars. Now, the best agent, extracted from our magnesia or subject, takes on the appearance of a metallic body, charged with metallic spirits, to better withdraw it from the greedy one's avidity, to give it all the possible names of metals, minerals, petrifications, and salts. Among these denominations, the most familiar is certainly that of Saturn, considered to be the metallic Adam. So we cannot better complete our instruction but by letting the philosophers speak who have very specially treated this matter. Here then is a translation of a rather suggestive chapter by Daniel Mylius⁽³⁾, devoted to the study of Saturn, which reproduces the teachings of two famous adepts: Isaac Hollandus, and Theophrastus Paracelsus:

"Isaac Hollandus says in his *Vegetable Work*: Know, my son, that the stone of the philosophers must be made by means of Saturn, and that once it is obtained in its perfect state, it performs the projection both in the human body, internally as well as externally, and in the metals. Know also that in all vegetable works, there is no greater secret than in Saturn, for we find the putrefaction of gold only in Saturn where it is hidden. Saturn contains within it the honest gold, on which all philosophers agree, provided all its superfluities, i.e., its feces are removed from it, only then has it been purged. The outer is brought inside, the inner manifests outer, and that is its redness and then that is the honest Gold.

"Besides, Saturn easily enters into solution and coagulates similarly. It lends itself readily to the extraction of its mercury. It can be easily sublimated, so such an extent that it becomes the mercury of the sun. For Saturn contains within itself the gold which the Mercury needs, and its mercury is as pure as that of gold. For these reasons, I say that Saturn is, for our Work, by far preferable to gold; for if you want to extract mercury from gold, you will need more than a year to extract this body out of the sun, while you can extract mercury from Saturn in 27 days. Both metals are good, but you can assert with more certainty yet, that Saturn is the stone that the philosophers do not want to name and whose name until today has been hidden. For were its name known, many would have found it, who are eagerly looking for it, and this art would have become common and without much expense. Thus to avoid these drawbacks, the philosophers have hidden its name with great care. Some have enveloped it in marvelous parables, saying that Saturn is the vase to which nothing foreign must be added, except that which comes from it; in such a way that there is no man, however poor, who cannot be occupied with this Work, since it does not require great expense and little work and a few days are needed to obtain the Moon from it, and a little bit later the Sun. We therefore find in Saturn everything necessary for the Work. In it is the perfect mercury, in it are all the colors

of the world which can be manifested, in it is the true blackness, the whiteness, the redness and in it also is the weight.

"I therefore confide in you that it is easy after that to understand that Saturn is our philosophical stone, and that Bronze from which mercury and our stone can be extracted, in little time and without a lot of disbursements, using our brief art. And the stone we obtain from it is our Bronze, and the acute water, which is within it, is our stone. Here are the Stone and the Water about which philosophers have written mountains of books".

Theophrastus Paracelsus in the *5th Canon of Saturn* says:

"Saturn speaks thus of its nature: the six (metals) were joined to me and infused their spirit into my decaying body; but they added to it that which they did not want and attributed it to me. But my brothers are spiritual and penetrate my body, which is fire, in such a way that I am consumed by fire, so that they (the metals), except for the two, the Sun and Moon, are purged by my water. My spirit is the water which softens all the congealed and sleeping bodies of my brothers. But my body conspires with the earth, to such an extent that, that which attaches itself to this earth, is rendered similar to it and brought back into its body. And I know nothing else in the world which can produce this as I can. Chemists must therefore abandon all other processes and stick to the resources that can be drawn from me.

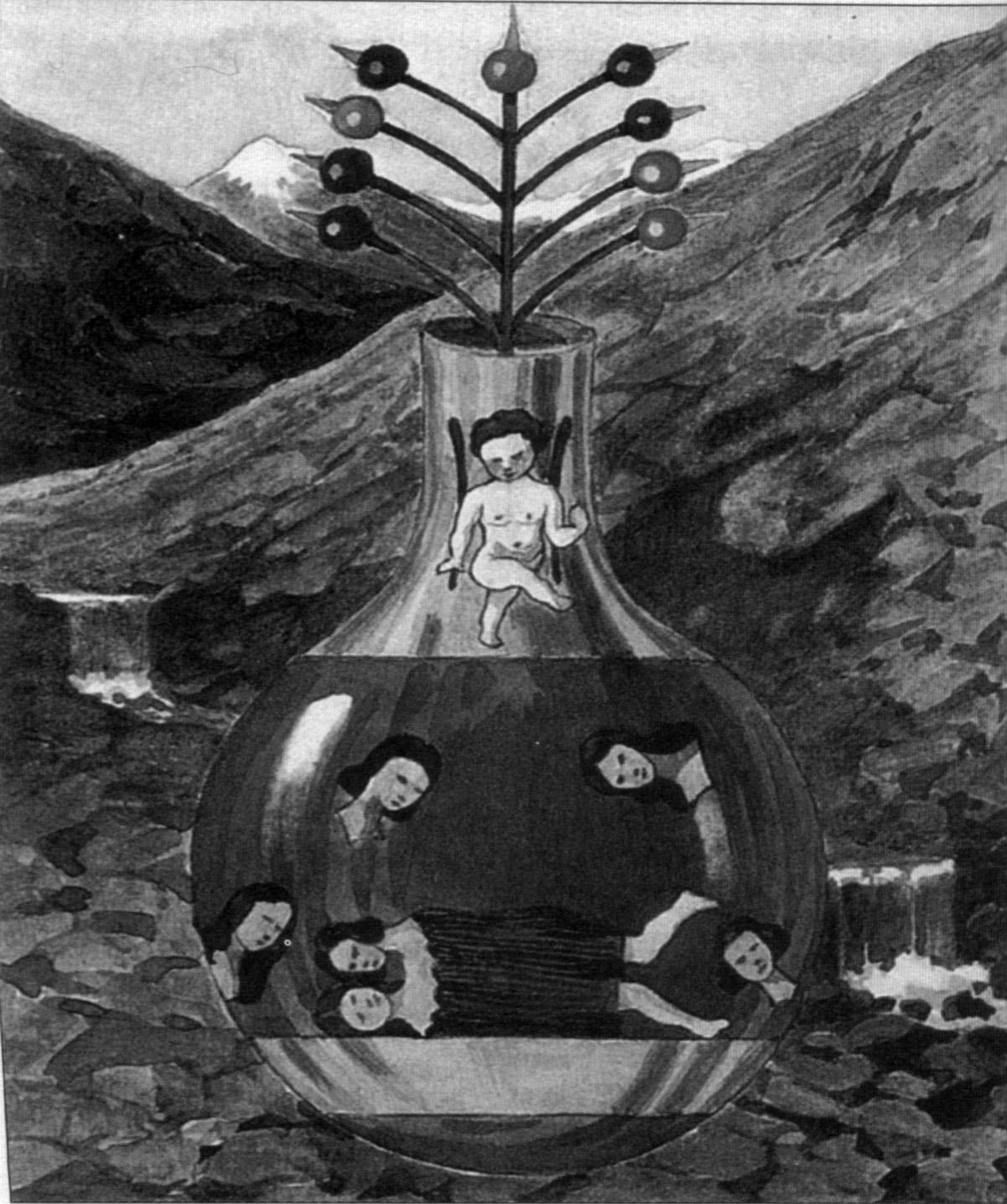
"The Stone, which in me is cold, is my Water by means of which one can coagulate the spirit of the seven metals and the essence of the seventh, of the Sun or of the Moon, and with the grace of God, profits so much after three weeks that the menstruum of Saturn can be prepared, which will immediately dissolve the pearls. If the spirits of Saturn are melted in a solution, they immediately coagulate into a mass and pull out of the gold the animated oil; then by this means all metals and gems can be dissolved in one moment, which the philosopher will keep to himself as much as he will deem appropriate. But I want to remain as obscure on this point as I have been clear up to here".

To complete our study of Prudence and of the symbolic attributes of our science, we still must speak to the compass which Michel Colombe's beautiful statue holds in her right hand. We shall be brief about it. The mirror has already informed us on the subject of the art; the double face, on the necessary union of the subject with the chosen metal; the serpent, on the fatal death and the glorious resurrection of the body, resulting from this union. In turn, the compass will give us additional, indispensable indications which are that of its proportions. Without knowing them, it would be impossible to conduct and perfect the Work in a normal, regular, and precise fashion. This is what the compass expresses, whose branches not only are used for the proportional measures of distances among themselves as well as to their comparisons, but also for the perfect geometric drawing of the circumference, image of the completed hermetic cycle and Work. We have exposed, elsewhere in this book, what is meant under the terms of proportions or weights --- secret veiled under the form of the compass --- and we have shown that they contain a double notion --- that the weight of nature and that of the weights of art. We will not dwell on it, but simply say that the harmony resulting from the natural proportions which are forever mysterious, can be translated by this proverb of Linthaut: The virtue of sulphur only expands up to the certain proportion of a term. On the contrary, the relationship among the weights of the art, as they remain subject to the will of the artist, are expressed by The Cosmopolite's aphorism: The weight of the body is singular and that of water is plural. But, as philosophers teach that sulphur is likely to absorb up to 10 and 12 times its weight in mercury, we can immediately see the necessity for additional operations, about which the authors are barely concerned; the imbibitions and reiterations. We will act in

the same way and submit these details of the practice to the beginner's own sagacity, because they are easy to perform and secondary in terms of the research per se.

(1) In order to illustrate these precious indications of the master, we are adding, to the second book of *The Dwellings of the Philosophers*, the beautiful and very revealing composition, *God's Precious Gift*, "written by George Aurach and hand-painted by him, in the year of the Saved and Redeemed Humanity, 1415" (**Plate XXXIX**)

(2) J. H. Pott: *Dissertation sur le Soufre des Metaux (Dissertation on the Sulfur of the Metals)*, thesis defended in Halle, 1716, published by TH. Herissant, Paris, 1759, vol. 1, p. 61.



GOD'S PRECIOUS GIFT
15th century Manuscript, Second Drawing
Georges Aurach

PLATE XXXIX

BODYGUARDS VII

In the cathedral at Nantes, the evening twilight gradually declines. The shadows invade the ogival vaults, fill the nave, and bathe the petrified humanity of the majestic edifice. On our sides, the powerful and solemn columns climb toward the intricate arches, the transepts and pendentives which the increasing darkness now steals from our eyes. A bell is ringing. An invisible priest in a subdued voice recited the evening prayers, and the knell from above answers the prayer from below. Only the peaceful flames of the tapers spot with golden brightness the darkness of the sanctuary. Then once the mass is done, a sepulchral silence hands over all these inert and cold things, witnesses to a distant past, pregnant with mystery and with the unknown...

In their fixed attitude, the four stone guardians seem to emerge imprecise and blurred from the midst of this semi-darkness. Mute sentinels of an ancient Tradition, these symbolic women at the corners of the empty mausoleum, guarding the rigid images of marble, of dispersed bodies, buried no one knows where, move us and make us ponder. Oh, vanity of earthly things! Fragility of human wealth! What is left now of those, whose glory you were supposed to commemorate and whose grandeur you were supposed to recall? A cenotaph. Even less: a pretext for art, a support of science, a masterpiece without any usefulness or destination, a simple historical memory, but whose philosophical scope and ethical teaching go well beyond the sumptuous banality of its first assignment,

And, before these noble figures of the cardinal Virtues, veiling the fourfold knowledge of the eternal Sapience, the words of Solomon (Prov. 3: 13-19) naturally come to mind:

"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are note to be compared upon her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her: and happy is every one that retaineth her. The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding that he established the heavens".

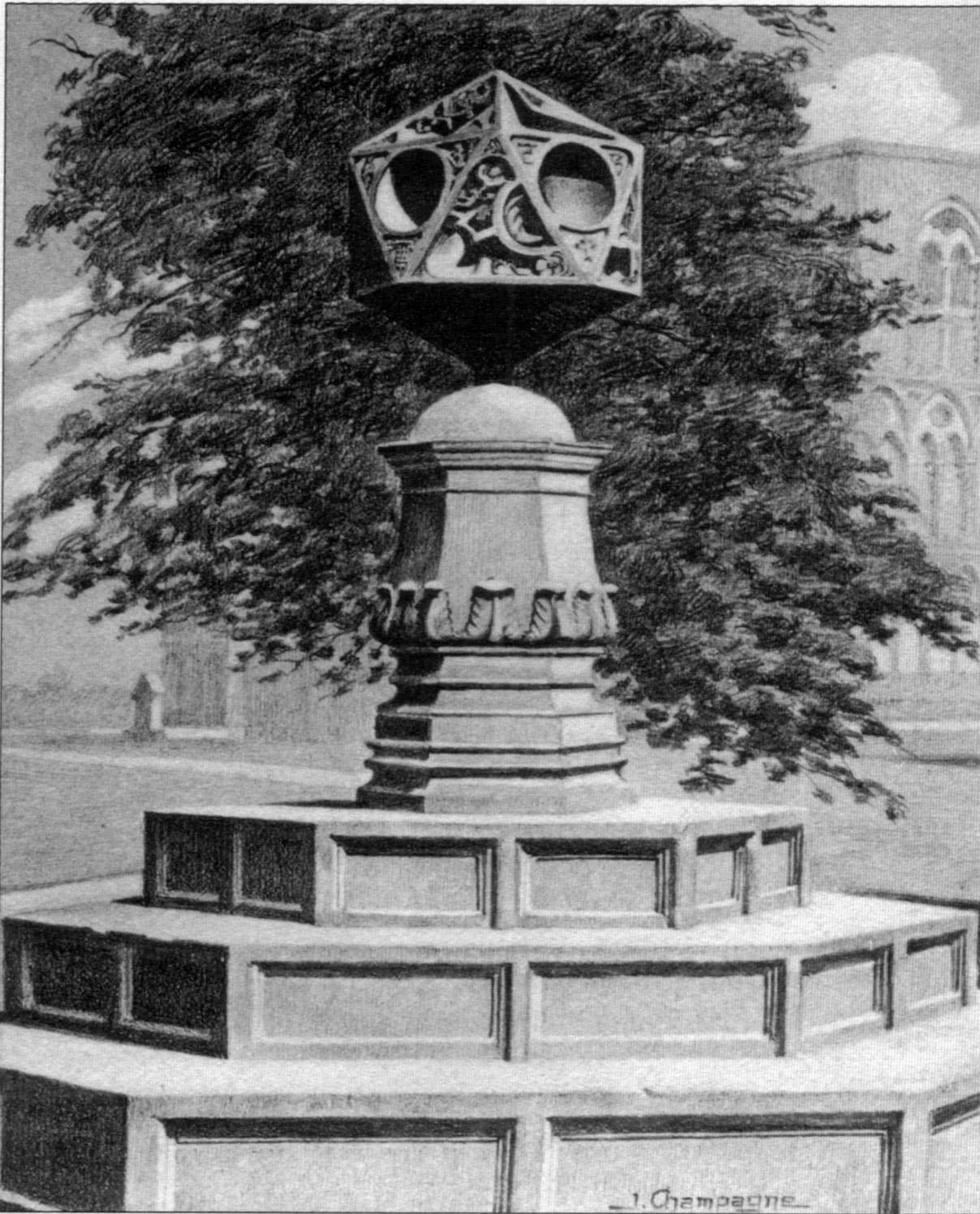
THE SUNDIAL OF THE HOLYROOD PALACE IN EDINBURGH

It is an extremely unusual little building. And we would only search our memories in vain: we cannot find an image analogous to this original, very strongly featured work. It is more like an erected crystal, a gem raised on a support, than a genuine monument. And this gigantic sample of mining productions, would perhaps be more in its place in a mineralogy museum, rather than in the middle of a park which the public is not allowed to enter.

Built at the order of Charles I in 1633, by John Milne, his master builder, with John Bartoun's collaboration, it essentially consists in a geometric block, carved in the shape of a regular icosahedron, its faces hollowed with hemispheres and with rectilinear cavities, which is supported by a pedestal standing on a pentagonal base formed of three plane steps. Only the base, which suffered from bad weather, had to be restored. Such is the Sundial of the Holyrood Palace (**Plate XL**).

Antiquity, to which we can always fruitfully refer, has left a certain number of sundials of various shapes, discovered in the ruins of Castel-Nuevo, of Pompeii, Tusculum, etc. Others are known to us from the descriptions of scientific writers, particularly of Vitruvius and Pliny. This dial called Hemicyclium, attributed to Berosus (around 280 BC) was composed of a semi-circular surface "on which a stylus marked the hours, the days, and even the months". The one called Scaphe was composed of a hollow block, having in its center a needle whose shadow was projected on its side. It was supposed to have been built by Aristarchus of Samos (3rd century BC) just like the Discus dial, made of a horizontal round table, with slightly raised edges. Among the unknown shapes of which, for the most part, only the names come down to us, the following sundials were quoted: Arache, on which it was said, the hours were engraved at the extremity of tiny threads, which gave it the appearance of a spider (the invention is said to be the invention of Eudoxus of Cnide around 330 BC); Plinthium, a horizontal disk drawn on the square base of a column, of which Scopus of Syracuse is alleged to be the author; Pelecinon another horizontal dial by Patroclus; Conum, a conical system by Dionysidorus of Amisus, etc.

None of these shapes nor of these related building correspond to that of the unusual edifice in Edinburgh; none can serve as its prototype. And yet its denomination, the one justifying its reason to be, is doubly accurate. It is at once a multiple sundial and a genuine hermetic clock. This strange icosahedron represents for us a twofold gnomonic work. The Greek word [*492-1] (*gnomon*), which was integrally transmitted to the Latin and French languages (*gnomon*), possesses a meaning other than that of the needle indicating, by projecting a shadow upon a plane, the movement of the sun. [*492-2] (*Gnomon*) also designates the one who becomes aware, who learns; it defines the prudent, the sensible, the enlightened. The root of this word [*492-3] (*gignosco*), also written [*492-4] (*ginosko*), double an orthographic form whose meaning is to know, to understand, to think, to resolve. Thence comes [*492-5] (*gnosis*), knowledge, erudition, doctrine, from which derives our French word Gnose (and English Gnosis), doctrine of the Gnostics, and philosophy of the Magi. We know that Gnosis was the body of the sacred knowledge, which the Magi carefully kept secret and which, for the initiates, was the object of esoteric teaching. But the Greek root, where *gnomon* and *gnosis* derive from, also formed another Greek word [*492-6] (*gnome*), corresponding to our word *gnome*, meaning mind, spirit, intelligence. Now the gnomes, subterranean genii, appointed to guarding the mineral treasures, constantly watching the gold, silver and precious stone mines, appear as the symbolic representation, the humanized figures of the vital metallic spirit and of



EDINBURGH - THE HOLYROOD PALACE
The Sundial - 1633

material activity. Tradition depicts them as quite ugly and very short; on the other hand, they are of a gentle and benevolent disposition and very pleasant to get on with. We can therefore easily understand the hidden reason for the legendary tales where the friendship of a gnome opens wide the doors of earthly riches.

The gnomonic icosahedron of Edinburgh is therefore, apart from its standard purpose, a hidden translation of the Gnostic Work, of the Great Work of the Philosophers. For us, the purpose of this little monument is not only to indicate the daily hours, but also the progress of the sun of the Sages in the Philosophers' Work. And this progress is regulated by the icosahedron, which is this unknown crystal, the salt of Sapience, spirit or fire incarnate, the familiar obliging gnome, friend of the good artists, who allows men to access the supreme knowledge of the ancient Gnosis.

Was the Knighthood totally unrelated to the building of this curious Sundial, or at least to its particular decoration? We do not think so, and believe we can find proof of it in the fact that, on several sides of the solid, the emblem of the thistle is repeated with a significant emphasis. Indeed, we count six flower heads and two stems in bloom of the species *serratula arvensis*. Could we not recognize in the obvious preponderance of the symbol the ensign specific to the Knights of the Order of the Thistle ⁽¹⁾, the affirmation of a secret meaning imposed on the work and countersigned by them?

What is more, did Edinburgh actually possess, apart from this royal Order whose hieroglyphic esotericism leaves no doubt, a center of hermetic initiation placed under its dependence? We could not ascertain it. Yet, approximately 30 years before the building of the sundial, 14 years after the official cancellation of the Order, which became a secret Fraternity, we see the appearance, in the immediate surroundings of Edinburgh, of one of the most learned Adepts and one of the most fervent propagators of alchemical truth, Seton, famous under the pseudonym of The Cosmopolite. "During the summer of 1601", writes Louis Figuier, "a Dutch pilot, called Jacques Haussen, was caught by a storm in the North Sea and thrown on the coast of Scotland, not far from Edinburgh, at a short distance from the village of Seton or Seatoun. The shipwrecked sailors were helped by a local inhabitant who possessed a house and some land on this shore; he succeeded in saving several of these unfortunate fellows, welcomed with much humanity the pilot in his house, and gave him the means to return to Holland" ⁽²⁾. This man was called Sethon or Sethonius Scotus ⁽³⁾. The Englishman Campden, in his *Britannia*, indeed indicates, very close to the place of the seashore where the pilot Haussen was shipwrecked, a dwelling which he calls the Sethon House and which he tells us is the residence of the Earl of Winton. It is thus probable that our Adept belonged to this noble family of Scotland, which would provide an argument of a certain worth to the hypothesis of a possible relationship between Sethon and the knights of the Order of the Thistle. Perhaps the man had taught himself in the very place where we see him practice this work of mercy and of high morals, which characterize the elevated souls and the true philosophers. Be that as it may, this fact marks the beginning of a new existence devoted to the hermetic apostolate, a wandering, eventful, brilliant life, sometimes filled with vicissitudes, lived entirely abroad and that martyrdom was to tragically crown two years later (December 31, 1603 or January 1, 1604). It therefore seems that the Cosmopolite, solely concerned with his mission, never came back to his native country, which he left in 1601 only after having acquired a perfect mastery of the Art. These reasons, or rather these conjectures, lead us to connect the Knights of the Thistle with the famous alchemist by invoking the hermetic testimony of the Edinburgh Sundial.

In our opinion, the Scottish sundial is a modern replica, at once more concise and more learned, of the ancient Tabula Smaragdina. This Table was composed of two columns of green marble, according to some, or of an artificial emerald sheet according to others, on which the solar Work was carved in cabalistic terms. The tradition attributes it to the Father of the Philosophers, Hermes Trismegistus, who claims to be its author, although his quite obscure personality does not betray in any way whether the man belonged to legend or to history. Others claim that this testimony of the sacred science, initially written in Greek, was discovered after the Biblical flood in a rocky cave of the Hebron valley. This detail, lacking authenticity, helps us better understand the secret meaning of this famous Table, which could very well never have existed anywhere but in the subtle and mischievous imagination of the old masters. It is said that it is green --- as is the dew of spring called for this reason the Emerald of the Philosophers --- first analogy with the saline matter of the Sages; that it was written by Hermes, second analogy, since this matter bears the name of Mercury, Roman divinity corresponding to the Hermes of the Greeks. Finally, this analogy, this green mercury used for the three Works, is said to be triple, hence the epithet Trismegistus ([*495-1] --- *Trismegistos* --- three times great or sublime) added to the name of Hermes. The Emerald Table thus takes on the characteristics of a speech given by the mercury of the Sages on the manner in which the Philosophical Work is elaborated. It is not Hermes, the Egyptian Thoth, who speaks, but rather the Emerald of the Philosophers or the Isaiac Table itself ⁽⁴⁾.

The initial idea behind the Edinburgh sundial reflects a similar preoccupation. However, apart from the fact that it restricts teaching to the sole alchemical practice, it is no longer matter, in its qualities and its nature, that it expresses, but its form or physical structure. It is a crystalline edifice the chemical composition of which remains unknown. Its geometric configuration allows us to recognize only the mineralogical characteristics of saline bodies in general. It teaches us that the mercury is a salt --- which we already knew --- and that this salt originates in the mineral realm. Furthermore, it is what Claveus, The Cosmopolite, Limojon de St Didier, Basil Valentine, Huginus a Barma, Batsdorff, etc., emulate, assert and repeat when they teach us that the salt of metals is the Stone of the Philosophers ⁽⁵⁾.

We can therefore reasonably see in this sundial a monument erected to the Philosophical Vitriol, the initial subject and primum ens of the philosophers' stone. Yet, all the metals are nothing but salts, which their textures prove and which the ease by which they form crystallized compounds demonstrates; in the end, these salts melt into the water of their crystallization and take on the appearance of oil or mercury. Our Vitriol obeys the same law, and, since it leads the artist fortunate enough to discover it and prepare it, toward success, it has received from our predecessors the name of Oil of Victory. Others, considering its color, and deliberately playing on the assonance, have called it Huile de Verre ⁽⁶⁾ (Oil of Glass --- *vitri oleum*), which marks its glassy appearance, its oily fluidity in the fire and its green coloration (*viridis*). It is this pure color which allowed it to be given all the names which hide its true nature from the layman. It has been given, says Arnold de Villanova, the names of trees, of leaves, herbs, anything with a green coloration, "so as to mislead the fools". The metallic compounds, yielding green salts, contributed to a large extent to the inflation of this nomenclature. In addition, the philosophers, reversing the order, chose to design green things by hermetic names probably to emphasize the significance assigned this color in alchemy. The "mercureau", for example, or little mercury [or: mercury water] became our macquereau (mackerel), still used on April Fool's Day ⁽⁷⁾ to disguise the sender's personality. It is a mystical fish, and the object of mystifications. It owes its name and reputation to its brilliant green coloration, with black stripes similar to that of the mercury of the Sages. Bescherelle indicates that in the year 1430, the mackerel was the only sea fish available in Paris, where, according to a rather ancient custom, it was served with groseilles vertes (gooseberries) ⁽⁸⁾. Do

we know why the cuttlefish received their name? Simply because they lay green eggs, forming clusters like grapes. Our green mercury, the agent of putrefaction and of regeneration, is responsible for the cuttlefish having its name of [*496-1] (*sepia*), in the primitive language; the root of this word is [*496-2] (*sepo*), which means to putrefy, to reduce into rot. Thanks to its green eggs, the cuttlefish bears a cabalistic name, just like the Saturnia of the pear tree (*Saturnya pyri*), a large butterfly with emerald green eggs.

In their formulas, the Greek alchemists followed the custom of translating the hermetic solvent by indicating its color. To create their symbol, they assembled two consonants of the Greek word [* 497-1] (*chloros*), green, and X and P being juxtaposed. Now this typical number exactly reproduces the Greek monogram of Christ, extracted from his name [*497-2] (*Christos*). Should we see, in this similarity, the consequence of a simple coincidence or that of a rational intention? The philosophical mercury is born from a pure substance, Jesus is born from an undefiled mother; the Son of Man and the child of Hermes both lead the life of pilgrims, both die prematurely as martyrs, one on the cross, the other in the crucible; they both resurrect, one and the other, on the third day. Well, these are indeed curious concurrences, but we could not ascertain that the Greek hermeticists knew them or intended to use them.

On the other hand, would it be pushing courage all the way to rashness if we connected the esotericism of our science to such a practice of the Christian church which took place on May 1st ? On that day, in many cities, the clergy walk in procession --- the Green procession --- to cut the shrubs and the branches with which churches were decorated, and particularly the ones whose names include Our Lady. These processions no longer take place today. Only the tradition of May Trees ⁽⁹⁾ which, coming down from them, have been kept and still continue in our villages. Symbolists will easily discover the reason for these obscure rites if they remember that Maia was the mother of Hermes. We also know that the dew of May or Emerald of the philosophers is green and that the Adept Cyliani metaphorically declares this vehicle to be essential for the work. Thus, we do not claim to insinuate that it is necessary to collect, as certain spagyrist and characters of the *Mutus Liber*, the nocturnal dew of the month of Mary, by attributing to it qualities which we know it does not have. The dew of the sages is a salt, not a water, but it is the special coloration of this water which is used to designate our subject.

Among the ancient Hindus the philosophical matter was represented by the goddess Moudevi ([*497-3] --- *mudesis* --- humidity, rot; from the root [*497-4] --- *mudao* --- to rot). Born from the Sea of Milk, it is said that she was represented, painted green, mounted on a donkey, and bearing in her hand a banner in the middle of which a crow could be seen.

Probably also hermetic is the origin of the Day of the Green Wolf, folk festivities of which the custom was long maintained at Jumieges, and which the custom was long maintained at Jumieges, and which was celebrated on June 24, day of the solar exaltation in honor of St Austreberthe. A legend tells us that the female saint was washing the linen of the famous abbey where she brought it on a donkey. One day, the wolf strangled the donkey. St Austreberthe condemned the guilty animal to take on the task of its victim, and the wolf fulfilled it perfectly until its death. It is the memory of this legend that this celebration perpetuated. However the reason why the color green was attributed to the wolf is not explained. But we can assuredly say that it is by strangling and devouring the donkey, that the wolf became green and this would suffice. The fierce wolf, "savage with hunger", is the agent indicated by Basil Valentine in the first of his Twelve Keys. This wolf ([*498-1] (*Lukon*) is first gray and does not let us guess the ardent fire, the bright light which it holds hidden in its coarse body. Its meeting with the donkey manifests this light: [*498-2] (*lucos*) becomes

[*498-3] (*luce*), the first morning glimmer, dawn. The gray wolf is dyed as a green wolf and then it becomes our secret fire, the nascent Apollo, [*498-4] (*luchegenes*), the father of light.

As we assemble here everything that can help the investigator discover the mysterious agent of the Great Work, we will till give him the Legend of the Green Tapers. This legend has to do with the famous Black Virgin of Marseilles, Our Lady of Confession, whom the crypts of the old St Victor Abbey shelter. This legend contains, behind the veil of allegory, the description of the work which the alchemist must perform in order to extract from the coarse mineral, the living and luminous spirit, the secret fire it encloses as a translucent, green crystal, fusible like wax, and which the sages named their Vitriol.

Here is this naive and precious hermetic tradition ⁽¹⁰⁾:

A young woman from ancient Massilia ⁽¹¹⁾, called Martha, a simple little working girl, and an orphan for a long time, had devoted to the black Virgin of the Crypts a very unusual cult. She offered her all the flowers that she went to pick on the hillsides --- thyme, sage, lavender, rosemary --- and she never missed, rain or shine, the daily mass.

The day before Christmas, the feast of Purification, Martha was awakened in the idle of the night by a secret voice which invited her to go to the cloister to hear the morning mass. Fearing that she had slept longer than usual, she dressed quickly, went out and since now had spread its mantel on the ground reflecting a certain light, she believed that dawn was near. She quickly reached the threshold of the monastery, whose door was open. There, meeting a cleric, she asked him to say a mass in her name but as she was without money, she slipped from her finger a humble gold ring, her only wealth, and she placed it as an offering under an altar candlestick.

As soon as the mass began, the young girl was extremely surprised to see the white tapers turn green, of a celestial, unknown green, diaphanous and brighter than the most beautiful of emeralds or the rarest of malachites. She could not believe her eyes nor take them from it.

When the *Ite missa est* finally came and pulled her out of her ecstasy for this prodigy and she regained outside the sense of the familiar reality, she noticed that night had not yet ended; the first hour of the day was just ringing at the belfry of St Victor church.

Not knowing what to think of the adventure, she went back to her dwelling but came back early in the morning to the abbey. There was already in the holy place a great gathering of people; anxious and troubled, she made inquiries; she was told no mass had been said since the day before. Martha, at the risk of passing for a visionary, then told in details the miracle she had just witnessed, a few hours earlier, and the faithful crowded with her to the cave. The orphan girl had told the truth, and the tapers still shone at the altar, with full, incomparable brilliance.

In his *Notice sur l'Antique Abbaye de Saint-Victor de Marseille (Notes on the Ancient St Victor Abbey in Marseilles)*, Abbott Laurin speaks of the custom, still followed by the people, to carry green tapers during the processions of the Black Virgin. These tapers are blessed on February 2, say of Purification, commonly known as the Candlemas. The author adds that "the Candlemas tapers must be green, although the reason why is not well known. Various documents indicate that green colored tapers were used in other locations, in the monastery of the nuns of St Sauveur, in Marseilles, in 1479, and in the city of St Sauveur, near Aix-en-Provence, until 1620. Elsewhere, this custom was lost, while it was preserved in St Victor".

Such are the essential points of the symbolism, specific to the Sundial of Edinburgh, that we intended to bring under consideration.

In the special decoration of the emblematic icosahedron, the visitor powerful enough to be able to approach it --- for, without relevant motives, he will ever obtain the authorization to do so --- will note, besides the hieroglyphic thistles of the order, the respective monograms of Charles I, beheaded in 1649, and of his wife, Marie-Henriette of France. The letters C R (Carolus Rex) apply to the former; M R (Maria Regina) designate the latter. Their son Charles II, born in 1630 --- he was then 3 years old when the monument was erected --- is featured on the sides of the crystal by the initials C P (Carolus Princeps), each surmounted by a crown, as were his father's initials. The visitor will also see, next to the coat of arms of England, of Scotland, and of the Irish harp, five roses and as many fleurs-de-lys, separate and distinct, emblems of wisdom and knighthood, the latter emphasized by the plumed helmet with three ostrich feathers, which one upon a time ornamented the helmets of knights. Finally, other symbols, which we have analyzed in the course of our present study, will complete the description of the hermetic character of this curious edifice: the crowned lion holding a sword in one paw and a scepter in the other; the angel, represented with spread wings; St George trampling the dragon and St Andrew offering the instrument of his martyrdom --- the X-shaped cross; the two rosebushes of Nicolas Flamel, close to the scallop, and the three hearts of the famous alchemist of Bourges, the Chancellor of the Exchequer to King Charles VII.

We shall end here our visits to the old philosophers' dwellings.

It would indeed be easy for us to add to these studies, as the decorative examples of hermetic symbolism, applied to lay buildings as opposed to religious ones, are still very numerous today; we preferred to limit our teaching to the most typical and the most characteristic emblems.

But before taking leave of our reader, by thanking him for his benevolent attention, we shall cast a last glance over the secret science as a whole. And, like the old man, who likes to evoke memories, who dwells on the highlights of the past, in the same fashion we hope to discover, in this retrospective examination, the principal fact or object of the essential preoccupations of the true sons of Hermes.

This important point, where the elements and the principles of the highest knowledge are concentrated, could not be searched nor encountered in life, as life is within us, as it radiates around us, as it is familiar to us and as it suffices to know how to observe it in order to grasp its different manifestations. It is in death that we can recognize it, in this invisible domain of pure spirituality, where the soul, liberated from its bonds, takes refuge at the end of its earthly stay; it is in nothingness, this mysterious nothing which contains everything, the absence where all presence reigns, that it is proper to search for the causes, the multiple effects which life is showing us.

Thus, it is at the moment when the inertia of the body declares itself, at the very hour when nature ends its labor, that the sage begins his. Let us therefore peer into the abyss, let us scan its depth, let us search the darkness that fills it, and nothingness will teach us. Birth teaches but few things, death however, from which life is born, can reveal everything. It alone holds the key to Nature's laboratory; it alone liberates the spirit, imprisoned at the core of the material body. A shadow, a dispenser of light, a sanctuary of truth, an untouched asylum of wisdom, death hides and jealously conceals its treasures from fearful mortals, from the

indecisive ones, from the skeptical ones, and from all those who disregard it or do not dare confront it.

For the philosopher, death is simply the peg which joins the material plane to the diving plane. It is the terrestrial door opening onto the sky, the link between nature and divinity; it is the chain connecting those who still are to those who no longer are. And, while human evolution, in its physical activity, can at its liking dispose of the past and of the present, on the other hand, the future belongs only to death. Consequently, far from inspiring a feeling of horror, or repulsion from the sage, death, the tool of salvation, appears desirable to him because it is useful and necessary. And while we are not allowed to shorten, by ourselves, the time fixed by our own destiny, at least we have received from the Lord license to provoke it in the heavy matter, which, according to God's order, is submitted to man's will.

Thus, we understand why the philosophers emphasized so much the absolute necessity of material death. Through death, does the imperishable and always active spirit stir, sieve, separate, clean, and purify the body. It owes to it the possibility of assembling its cleansed parts, of building with them its new dwelling, of finally transmitting to the regenerated form an energy it did not possess.

Considered from the point of view of its chemical action on the substance of the three kingdoms, death is clearly characterized by the intimate, profound, and radical dissolution of the bodies. This is why dissolution, called death by the old authors, asserts itself as the first and foremost of the Work operation, the one which the artist must strive to accomplish before any other. Whoever will discover the artifice of the true dissolution and will see its subsequent putrefaction take place, will have in his power the greatest secret of the world. He will also possess a sure means to access the most sublime truth. Such is the important point, the pivot of the art, according to Philalethes' own expression, which we wanted to point out to men of good faith, to benevolent and candid seekers.

Now by the fact that they are destined to the final dissolution, all beings must necessarily derive a similar benefit from it. Our planet itself cannot escape this inexorable law. It has its preordained time just as we have ours. The duration of its evolution is ordered, regulated in advance and strictly limited. Reason demonstrates it, and common sense intuits it, analogy teaches it and the Scriptures certify it: In the noise of an awful storm, the sky and the earth will pass...

During a time, time, and half a time ⁽¹²⁾. Death will spread its domination over the ruins of the world, over the remnants of destroyed civilizations. And our earth, after the convulsions of along agony, will resume the confused state of the original chaos. But the Spirit of God will float on the waters. And all things will be covered with darkness and steeped in the profound silence of tombs.

(1) The Order of the Thistle, created by James V, King of Scotland, in 1540, was originally composed of twelve knights, as all the fraternities derived from the Round Table. It was also named the Order of St Andrew, because one chapel of the Cathedral, dedicated to the Apostle, was especially assigned to them, because the decoration bore their effigy and finally because the Order Day was celebrated November 30, on St Andrew's Day. Abolished in 1587, it continued to exist secretly and was reestablished in 1687.

(2) See Louis Figuier, *L'Alchimie et les Alchimistes (Alchemy and the Alchemists)*; Paris, Hachette et Cie, 1856.

(3) The name is found spelled differently depending on the authors. Seton or Sethon is also called Sitonius, Sidonius, Suentonius, and Seethonius. All of these denominations are accompanied by the epithet Scotus, which designates a Scotsman by birth. As for the palace of Sethon, in the ancient parish of Haddingtonshire, annexed to Tranent in 1580, it was destroyed first by the English in 1544. Rebilt, Mary Stuart and Darnley stopped here, on March 11, 1566, the day after Rizzio's assassination; the Queen came back again, accompanied by Bothwell, in 1567, after Darnley's murder. James VI of Scotland stayed there in April 1603, when he came to take possession of the crown of England. During the funeral of the first Count of Winton, he attended the procession, seated on a park bench. In 1617, the same monarch spent his second night in Seton, after having crossed the Twed. Charles I and his court were received there twice on 1633. Nowadays, no vestige remains of this palace which was completely destroyed in 1790. Let us add that the Seton family had received the deed of ownership for the Seton and Winton lands in the 12th century.

(4) The text of the Emerald Table, very well known to the disciples of Hermes, may not be known by some readers. Here is the most accurate version of these famous words:

"It is true, without lie, certain and most veritable;

"That which is below is like that which is above, and that which is above is like that which is below; by these things, are made the miracles of one thing. And as all things are ad come from One, through the mediation of One, thus all things are born from this unique thing by adaptation.

"The Sun is its father, the Moon, its mother. The wind bore it in its belly. The Earth is its nurse and is receptacle. The Father of all, the Thelona of the universal world is here. Its force and power remain whole if it is converted into earth from fire, the subtle from the coarse slowly with great diligence. It ascends from the earth and descends from the heaven, and receives the strength of superior things and inferior things. You will have by this means the glory of the world, and all obscurity will flee from you.

"It is strength, strong with all strength, for it will conquer all subtle things and penetrate all solid things. Thus, the world was created. From there will come out admirable adaptations, of which the means is here given.

"This is why I was called Hermes Trismegistus, having the three parts of the universal philosophy.

"What I have said of the Solar Work is complete".

One can find the Emerald Table, reproduced on a rock, in Latin, in one of the beautiful plates illustrating the *Ampitheatrum Sapientiae Aeternae*, of Khunrath (1610). Johannes Grasseus, under the pseudonym of Hortulanus, gave on it, in the 15th century, a Commentary, translated by J. Girard de Tournus in the *Miroir d'Alchimie (The Mirror of Alchemy)*, Paris, Seveste, 1613.

(5) Extract the salt of metals", said the Cosmopolite, "without any corrosion nor violence, and this salt will produce the white and the red stone. The whole secret lies in the salt, from which our perfect Elixir is made".

(6) Translator's note: "Huile de verre" (oil of glass), or "Huile de vert" (oil of green or green oil).

(7) Translator's note: On April Fool's Day, children in France play at putting a little paper fish on the back of people without them noticing. The French for maquerel sounds very similar to the French "mercureau" or little mercury.

(8) Cabalistically: "groseolles vertes" (gooseberries) sounds like "gros sel vert" (coarse green salt).

(9) Translator's note: A *May* in France, is a green tree that one plants on the first day of the month of May, in front of the door of someone one wishes to honor.

(10) See the short play in verse called *La Legende des Cierge Verts (The Legend of the Green Tapers)* by Hippolyte Matabon, Marseilles, J. Cayer, 1889.

(11) Translator's note: Massilia is the Latin name of Marseilles.

(12) Daniel 7:25 and 12:7; Revelation 12:14.

THE PARADOX OF THE UNLIMITED PROGRESS OF SCIENCE

To all philosophers, to educated people, whoever they may be, to specialized scientists, as well as to simple observers, we pose the question:

"Have you ever thought about the inevitable consequences which are to result from unlimited progress?"

Already, because of the multiplicity of scientific acquisitions, man cannot live without tremendous energy and endurance, in an atmosphere of hectic, feverish, and unhealthy activity. He created the machine that increased his means and his power of action a hundred fold, but he has become its slave and its victim: slave in peace, victim in war. Distance no longer is an obstacle to him; he travels speedily from one point of the earth to the other by air, by sea and by land. We do not see however that this ease of traveling has made him better or happier; for, while the adage says that travel broadens the mind, it does not seem however to contribute much to strengthening the bonds of concord and brotherhood which should unite peoples. Borders have never been better guarded than today. Man possesses the marvelous ability to express his thought and to make himself heard in the remotest countries, yet these very means force new needs upon him. He can transmit and record light and sound vibrations, without gaining much else from it save the vain satisfaction of his curiosity, save a subjection rather unfavorable to his intellectual growth. Opaque bodies have become permeable to his glance, and, while he can now fathom the heavy matter, on the other hand, what does he know of himself, that is, of his origin, his essence, and his destiny?

Satisfied desires are followed by new, unfulfilled desires. We emphasize it: man always wants to go fast, ever faster, and this agitation is such that the possibilities at his disposal become insufficient. Carried away by his passion, his desires and his phobias, the horizon of his hopes recedes indefinitely. It is the frantic race towards the abyss, a constant wearing, an impatient and frenzied activity implemented without respite or rest. "In our century", said Jules Simon, quite rightly, "one must walk or run; whoever stops is lost". At this pace, at this rate, physical health collapses. In spite of the diffusion and the observance of rules of hygiene, and of prophylactic measures and despite the piling up of chemical drugs, illness continues its ravages with an untiring perseverance. To such extent that the organized fight against unknown plagues seems to have no other result but to cause new ones to appear, more acute, and more stubborn.

Nature herself gives us unequivocal signs of weariness: she is becoming lazy. It is only by dint of chemical fertilizers that the farmer now obtains average value crops. Ask a peasant, he will tell you that "the earth is dying", that seasons are disturbed, the climate modified. Every growing thing lacks sap and resistance, Plants wither --- this fact is officially recognized --- and prove unable to react against the invasion of parasitic insects or the attack of diseases involving mycelium.

Finally, we will reveal nothing by saying that the greatest part of discoveries, first oriented towards the increase of human well-being, were rapidly diverted from their goal and specifically applied to destruction. Instruments of peace are turned into machines of war and we already know too well the dominating role science played in modern cataclysms. Such is, unfortunately, the final goal, the outcome of scientific investigation; and such is also the

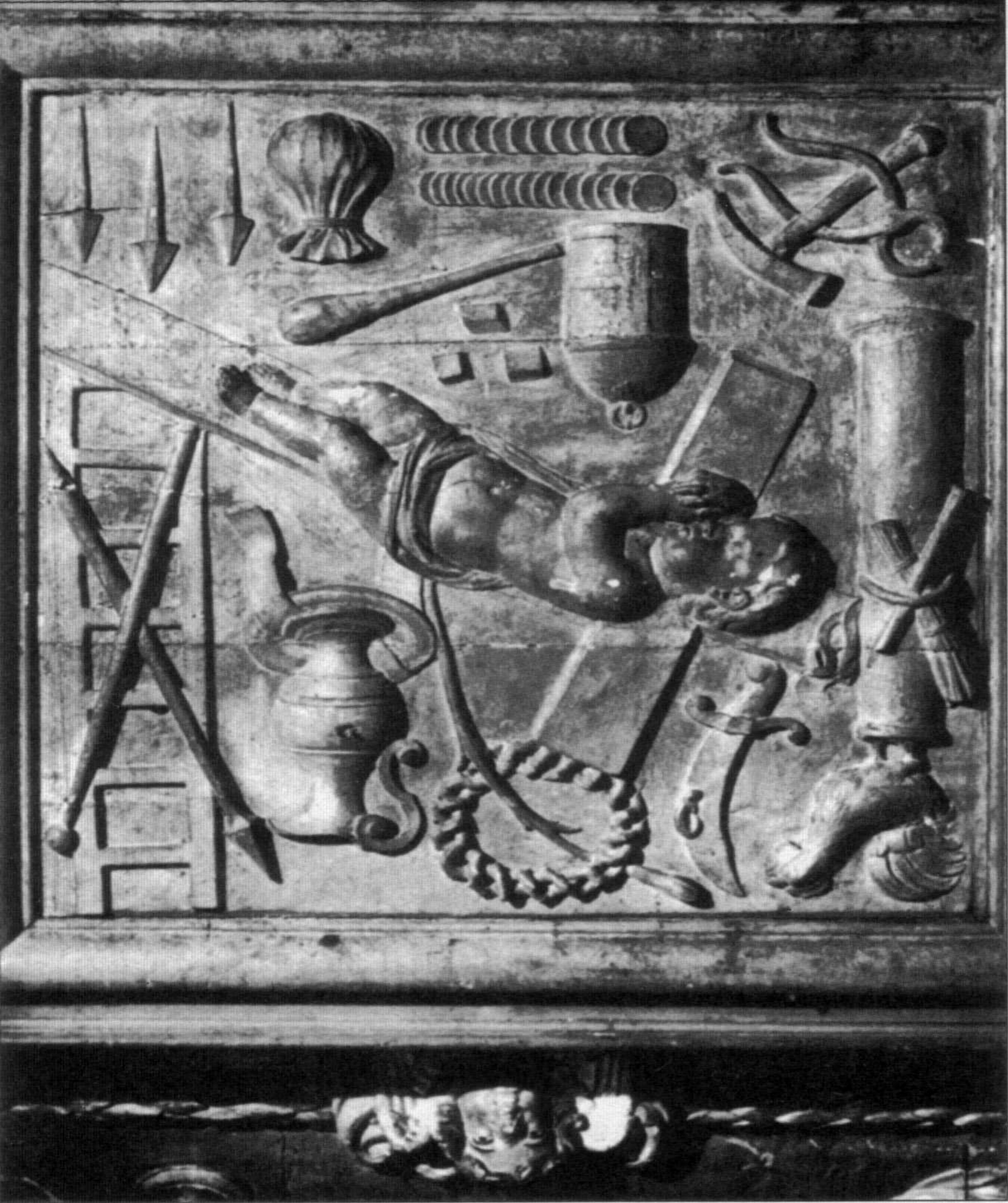
reason why man who pursued it with criminal intent, calls divine justice upon him and finds himself bound to be condemned by it.

So as to avoid the blame, that no doubt would have been addressed to them, of perverting peoples, the Philosophers always refused to openly teach the truths they had acquired or received from Antiquity. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre proves he knew this rule of wisdom when he states at the end of his *Indian Cottage*: "Truth should be searched with a simple heart; it will be found in nature; it must be told only to decent people". By ignorance of or by contempt for this first condition, exotericism spread unrest into mankind.

THE REIGN OF MAN

The Reign of Man, prelude to the last Judgment and the advent of a new Cycle, is symbolically expressed in a curious sculpted woodcut, kept in the Church of Saint-Sauveur, also known as the Church of the Chapter in Figeac (Lot). Under the religious design barely veiling its obvious esoteric quality, it shows the infant Christ asleep on the cross and surrounded by the instruments of the Passion (**Plate XLI**). Among these attributes of the divine martyrdom, six have been deliberately reunited to form an X, just like the cross, where the infant Christ is resting, and which was tilted so that it could reproduce that same form seen from an angle. So, recalling the four ages, we have the four Greek X (*khi*) whose numerical value of 600 yields by multiplication the 2,400 years of the world. We see then the spear of Longinus (John 19:34), the reed (Matthew 27:48, Mark 15:36) or the hyssop rod holding the sponge filled with vinegar (John 18:34), then the bundle of scourges and intertwined whip (John 19:1; Matthew 27:26; Mark 25:15); finally, the hammer which was used to pound the nails of crucifixion and the pliers used to pull them out after the death of the Savior.

Triple image of the ultimate radiance, graphic formula of a declining spiritualism, these X's leave their marks on the second cyclic period, at the end of which mankind struggles in darkness and confusion, until the day of the great Earth revolution and the liberating death. If we gather these three crosses and place the point of intersection of their branches on a common axis, we obtain a twelve-rayed geometric figure symbolizing the twelve centuries which constitute the Reign of the Son of Man and which come after the twelve preceding ones of the Reign of God.



FIGEAC (LOT) – THE CHURCH OF CHAPITRE
THE CHAPEL OF NOTRE-DAME DE PITIÉ
Instruments and Symbols of the Passion
Photo by Claude Letang

THE FLOOD

When people speak of the end of the world, they generally evoke and translate the idea of a universal cataclysm, bringing about both the total ruin of the planet, and the extermination of its inhabitants. According to this opinion, the earth, wiped off the face of the galaxy, would cease to exist. Its debris, projected into sidereal space, would fall in a rain of neoliths on worlds near ours.

Some more logical thinkers understand the expression in a less extended sense. According to them, the perturbation would affect mankind alone. It seems impossible for them to admit that our planet could disappear, although everything which lives, moves and gravitates on its surface is condemned to die; a Platonic thesis, which could be acceptable if it did not contain the irrational introduction of a miraculous factor: a renewed man born directly from the earth, like a simple vegetable and without preliminary seed.

It is not the way to understand the end of the world such as it is announced by the Scriptures and such as primitive traditions recount it, whatever race they belong to. When, to punish mankind for its crimes, God resolved to have it swallowed up by the waters of the flood, not only was the earth affected solely on its surface, but also a certain number of just, and chosen men, having obtained His grace survived the flood.

Although presented under symbolic appearances, this teaching is founded on a positive basis. We recognize the physical necessity of an animal and terrestrial regeneration which therefore cannot result in the complete obliteration of creatures, or suppress any of the conditions essential to the survival of this rescued core. Consequently, in spite of its apparent universality, in spite of the terrifying and long intermixing of the raging elements, we are certain that the huge catastrophe will not equally impact all places nor the expanse of all continents and seas. Certain privileged countries, as genuine Arks of rock, will shelter men who will have taken refuge there. There for one day, lasting two centuries, generations will watch --- anxious witnesses of the effects of divine power --- the gigantic duel between water and fire; there, in a relative calmness, at an equal temperature, in the pale and even light of a low ceiling of clouds, the chosen people will wait for peace to come and for the last clouds, dispersed by the breath of the golden age, to uncover the multicolored magic of a double rainbow, the brightness of new skies and the charm of a new earth.

For us who never accepted the arguments of rationalism, we deem that the Mosaic flood is indisputable and real. Furthermore, we know to what extent the Bible is superior to other books, how it remains the immutable Eternal Book, the Book of Cycles par excellence, in which, under the veil of parables, the revelation of human history is sealed, even over and beyond the annals of each people. It is the story in extenso of the travel accomplished by each cyclic generation. And since history forever repeats itself, the Bible, which figuratively describes its process, will forever remain the unique source, the true collection of historical events and of human revolutions, as much for bygone periods as for those that will succeed one another in the future.

Our purpose is not here to undertake to refute the arguments by which the adversaries of Moses' tradition have contested the accuracy of his testimony, not to provide the arguments by which the advocates of the revealed religion have established the authenticity and divine inspiration of its books.

We will only attempt to show that the reality of the flood is attested by the specific traditions of all the peoples, of the old as well as of the new continent.

The sacred books of the Hindus and the Iranians make mention of a flood. In India, Noah is called Vaisaswata or Satyavrata. The Greek legends speak of Ogyes and Deucalion; those of Chaldea, of Xixouthros or Sisouthros; those of China, of Fo-ki; those of Peru, of Bochica. According to the Assyrian-Chaldean cosmogony, as men, created by Marduk, became evil, the council of the gods decided to punish them. Only one man was just and because of this fact, he was loved by God Ea; his name was Utmapishtim, king of Babylon. So Ea revealed in a dream to Utmapishtim the imminent coming of the cataclysm and the means of escaping the wrath of the gods. The Babylonian Noah, therefore built an ark and locked himself up with his relatives, his family, his servants, the craftsmen who had constructed the vessel, and a whole herd of animals. Immediately darkness filled the sky, the waters of the abyss fell and covered the earth. Utmapishtim's ark floated for seven days and finally rested on top of a mountain. The just one, now saved, let a dove and a swallow fly, which returned to the boat, and then a crow which did not return. Then he came out of the ark and offered a sacrifice to the gods. For the Aztecs and other tribes who lived on the plateau of Mexico, it is Coxcox or Tezpi who plays the role of the Biblical Noah.

The Mosaic flood had the same importance, the same scope, the same repercussions as all the previous floods. Somehow it is the typical description of the periodic catastrophe resulting from the reversal of the poles. It is the simplified interpretation of the successive floods, of which Moses was probably aware, either because he had been an eyewitness to one of them -- - which would justify his own name --- or because he had obtained it through divine revelation. To us, the ark of salvation seems to represent the geographical location where the chosen ones gather when the great perturbation is near, rather than a boat hand-built by man. By its form, the ark already reveals itself as a cyclic figure rather than as a true ship. In a text where we must especially, according to the word of the Scriptures, take care to consider the spirit rather than the letter, it is impossible for us to take the building of the ship in a literal sense as well as the search "for all the pure and impure animals", and their reunion by couples. A disaster that imposes, for two centuries, to living and free beings, living conditions so different from their normal ones, so contrary to their needs go beyond the limits of our reason. It should not be forgotten that during the entire trial, the hemisphere, given over to the rush of water, is plunged into the most total darkness. It is indeed worth knowing that Moses speaks of cyclic days, whose secret value is equal to regular years. Let us be more specific: it is written that the flood rains lasted 40 days and that the waters covered the earth for 150 days, that is 190 days total. Then God caused a warm wind to blow, and the level of the sheet of water went down. The ark landed on Mount Ararat ⁽¹⁾, in Armenia. Noah opened the window (the return to light) and liberated a crow which, held back by corpses, did not come back. He then let a dove fly which immediately came back to the ark, for at that time trees were still submerged. The patriarch then waited seven days and again let the bird fly, which returned toward evening bringing back a green olive branch. The flood was over. It had lasted 197 cyclic days, give or take three years, two actual centuries.

Can we admit that a ship exposed to the storms for such a long time would be capable of resisting it? And, on the other hand, what should we think of its cargo? The implausibility, even so, could not totally shake our convictions. We hold the Mosaic account to be true, and positive as far as its basis, that is to say, as far as the actuality of the event of the flood is concerned, but most of the circumstances which accompany it, particularly those concerned with Noah, with the ark, and with the coming and goings of the animals are clearly allegorical. The text contains an esoteric teaching of considerable scope. Let us simply note

that Noah, who has the same cabalistic meaning as Noel (in Greek [*520-1] --- *Noe* --- Christmas in English), is a contraction of the Greek [*520-2] (*Neos-Helios*), New Sun. The ark [*510-3] (*Arche*) indicates the beginning of the new era. The rainbow ⁽²⁾ signifies the covenant that God makes with man, in a cycle which is just beginning; its is the born-again or renewed symphony, [*510-4] (*Sumphonia*): consent, agreement, union, pact. It is also the belt of Iris ([*510-5] --- *Zone*), the privileged zone.

Esdras' Book of Revelation informs us about the symbolic value of the books of Moses: "On the third day, while I was under a tree, a voice came to me from the side of that tree and said to me: 'Esdras, Esdras!'. I answered: 'Here I am', I got up and stood. The voice continued: 'I appeared to Moses and I spoke to him from the bush while my people were slaves in Egypt. I sent him as a messenger; I caused my people to come out of Egypt, I led them to Mount Sinai and I established them for a long time near me. I told them of many marvels; I taught them the mystery of days, I showed them the last times and I gave them this order: Tell this, hide that'" ⁽³⁾

But if we only consider the fact of the flood, we will be led to recognize that such a cataclysm was bound to leave profound signs of its passage and to somewhat modify the topography of the continents and the seas. It would be a serious mistake to believe that the geographical outline of ones and the others, their reciprocal situations, their layout on the surface of the globe the same 25 centuries ago at the most, from that they are today. In spite of our respect for the work of scientists who were concerned with prehistoric times, we should accept, only with the utmost reserve, the maps of the quaternary period reproducing the current configuration of the globe. It is obvious, for example, that an important part of the French soil was submerged for a long time, covered with sea sand, abundantly provided with shells, and of various calcareous terrains with imprints of ammonites. Let us also recall that the island of Jersey was still connected to the Cotentin Peninsula in Normandy in 709, the year when the waters of the Channel invaded the vast forest which went as far as Ouessant and was used as shelter for many villages.

History also reports that the Gauls, questioned as to what could inspire in them the greatest of terror, used to respond: "We have only one fear, it is that the sky fall on our heads". But this jest which was made out to be a proof of their daring bravery, is it not perhaps hiding a quite different reason? Instead of a simple bragging, would it not be a persistent memory of a real event? Who could dare to assert that our ancestors were not indeed the horrified victims of a collapsing sky in formidable cataracts, among the darkness of which a night lasted for generations?

ATLANTIS

Did this mysterious island, of which Plato left the enigmatic description, ever exist? A question difficult to solve, given the weakness of the means which science possesses to penetrate the secret of the abysses. Nevertheless, some observations seem to support the partisans of the existence of Atlantis. Indeed, soundings done in the Atlantic Ocean have allowed us to bring back to the surface fragments of lava whose structure irrefutably proves that they have been crystallized while in contact with air. It therefore seems that the volcanoes which ejected this lava were then rising on lands that had not yet been flooded. Another argument was thought to be discovered which seemed appropriate to justify the assertion of the Egyptian priests and Plato's tale, in this particular fact that the flora of Central America is similar to that of Portugal; the same vegetable species, transmitted by way of land would indicate a close continental relationship between the old and the new world. As for us, we see nothing impossible in the fact that Atlantis could have held an important place among the inhabited regions, nor in the fact that a civilization could have developed to the extent of reaching this high degree that God seems to have fixed as the being the limit of human progress: "You shall go no farther". Limits beyond which the symptoms of decadence manifest themselves, the fall is more pronounced if ruin is not sped up by the sudden eruption of an unforeseen catastrophe.

Faith in the truthfulness of Plato's works results in believing the reality of the periodical upheavals of which the Mosaic Flood, we said it, remains the written symbol and the sacred prototype. To those who negate what the priests of Egypt entrusted to Solon, we would only ask to explain to us what Aristotle's master wanted to reveal by this fiction of a sinister nature. For we indeed believe that beyond doubt, Plato became the propagator of very ancient truths, and that consequently his books contain a set, a body of hidden knowledge. His Geometric Number, and Cave have their signification; why should the myth of Atlantis not have its own.

Atlantis must have undergone the same fate as the others, and the catastrophe which submerged it falls obviously into the same cause as that which buried, 48 centuries later, under a profound sheet of water, Egypt, the Sahara, and the countries of Northern Africa. But more favored than the land of the Atlantean, Egypt gained from a raising of the bottom of the ocean and came back to the light of day, after a certain time of immersion. For Algeria and Tunisia with their dry "chotts" covered with a thick layer of salt, the Sahara and Egypt with their soils constituted for a large part of sea sand show that the waters invaded and covered vast expanses of the African continent. The columns of the Pharaohs' temples bear on them undeniable traces of immersion; in the hypostyle chambers, the slabs, still extant, which form the ceilings have been raised and moved by the oscillating motion of the waves; the disappearance of the outer coating of the pyramids and in general that of the stone joints (the Colossus of Memnon who used to sing) the evident traces of corrosion by water that can be noticed on the Sphinx of Giza, as well as on many other works of Egyptian statuary have no other origin. Moreover, it is probable that the priestly caste did not ignore the fate which was reserved for their country. This is perhaps the reason why the royal hypogaea were carved deep into the rock and that their openings were hermetically sealed. Could we not also recognize in it the effect of this belief in a future flood, in the mandatory crossing that the soul of the deceased had to accomplish after the body's death, and which justified the presence, among so many other symbols, of these rigged small boats, this miniature flotilla, which are a

part of the funereal furniture from Ezekiel ⁽⁴⁾, which announces to the disappearance of Egypt, is categorical and cannot lend itself to any ambiguity:

"I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven I will make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the Lord God. I will also vex the hearts of many people, when I shall bring thy destruction among the nations, into the countries which thou hast not known... When I shall make the land of Egypt desolate, and the country shall be destitute of that whereof it was full, when I shall smite all them that dwell therein, then shall they know that I am the Lord".

THE CONFLAGRATION

The cyclic history begins, at the 6th chapter of Genesis, with the narrative of the Flood; it ends, at the 20th chapter with the Book of Revelation, in the blazing flames of Judgment Day. Moses, rescued from the waters, writes the first one; St John, sacred figure of the solar exaltation, closes the book with the seals of fire and of sulphur.

In Melle (Deux-Sevres), one can admire the mystic knight, of whom the visionary of Patmos speaks, and who must come in the fullness of light and spring forth from the fire, in the manner of a pure spirit (**Plate XLII**). It is a solemn and noble statue that, under a semicircular arch of the St Peter Church, stands above the Southern porch, which because of its orientation is always subjected to the rays of the sun. The bow and the crown are given to him in the midst of the ineffable divine glory, whose lashing luster burns up everything it illuminates. While our horseman does not show the symbolic weapon, he is however covered with the sign of all royalties. His rigid bearing, his great stature announce power, but the expression of his face seems stamped with some sadness. His features compare to that of Christ, of the King of Kings, of the Lord of Lords, of the Son of Man who, according to Lentulus' report, was never seen to laugh, although he was often seen to cry. And we understand that it is not without melancholy that he comes back down here, to the places of his Passion, he, the eternal messenger of his Father, to impose on the perverted world, the ultimate trial, and to ruthlessly reap a shameful mankind. Mankind, ripe for the supreme punishment, is represented by the character hit and trampled by the horse, without its rider betraying the slightest concern.

Each period of 1200 years begins and ends with a catastrophe; human evolution expands and grows in the space of two scourges. Fire and water, the agents of all material mutations, work together during the same amount of time and each on an opposite region of the Earth. And, as the solar displacement, that is to say the ascent of the celestial body to the zenith of the pole, remains the bog engine for this elemental conflagration, its result is that the same hemisphere is once submerged at the end of a cyclic can once calcined at the end of the next one. While the South undergoes the paired heat of the sun with the fire of the earth, the North undergoes the constant affusion of the Southern seas, vaporized in the midst of the blazing fire, then condensed into huge clouds, constantly forced back. Now, since, during the previous cycle, the waters of the flood drowned our Northern Hemisphere, we should think that the flames of Judgment Day will consume it, during the last days of the present one.

We should calmly wait for our last hour; one of punishment for many, and of martyrdom for some.

In a concise, albeit very clear, manner, St Peter, the Christian Great Initiate, accurately marks the difference presented by the two cataclysms as they succeed one another in the same hemisphere, that is to say in ours, for the present case: "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?, for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they are willingly ignorant, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. Whereby the world that was then, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with great noise, and the element shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up...



MELLE (DEUX-SÈVRES)-THE CHURCH OF SAINT-HILAIRE
SEPTENTRIONAL PORCH
The Horseman of the Apocalypse
Photo by Archives photographiques

Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" ⁽⁵⁾.

The obelisk of Dommartin-sur-Tigeaux (Seine-et-Marne) is the tangible, expressive image, absolutely conforming to tradition, of the double terrestrial calamity, of the conflagration and of the flood, on the terrible Judgment Day (**Plate XLIII**).

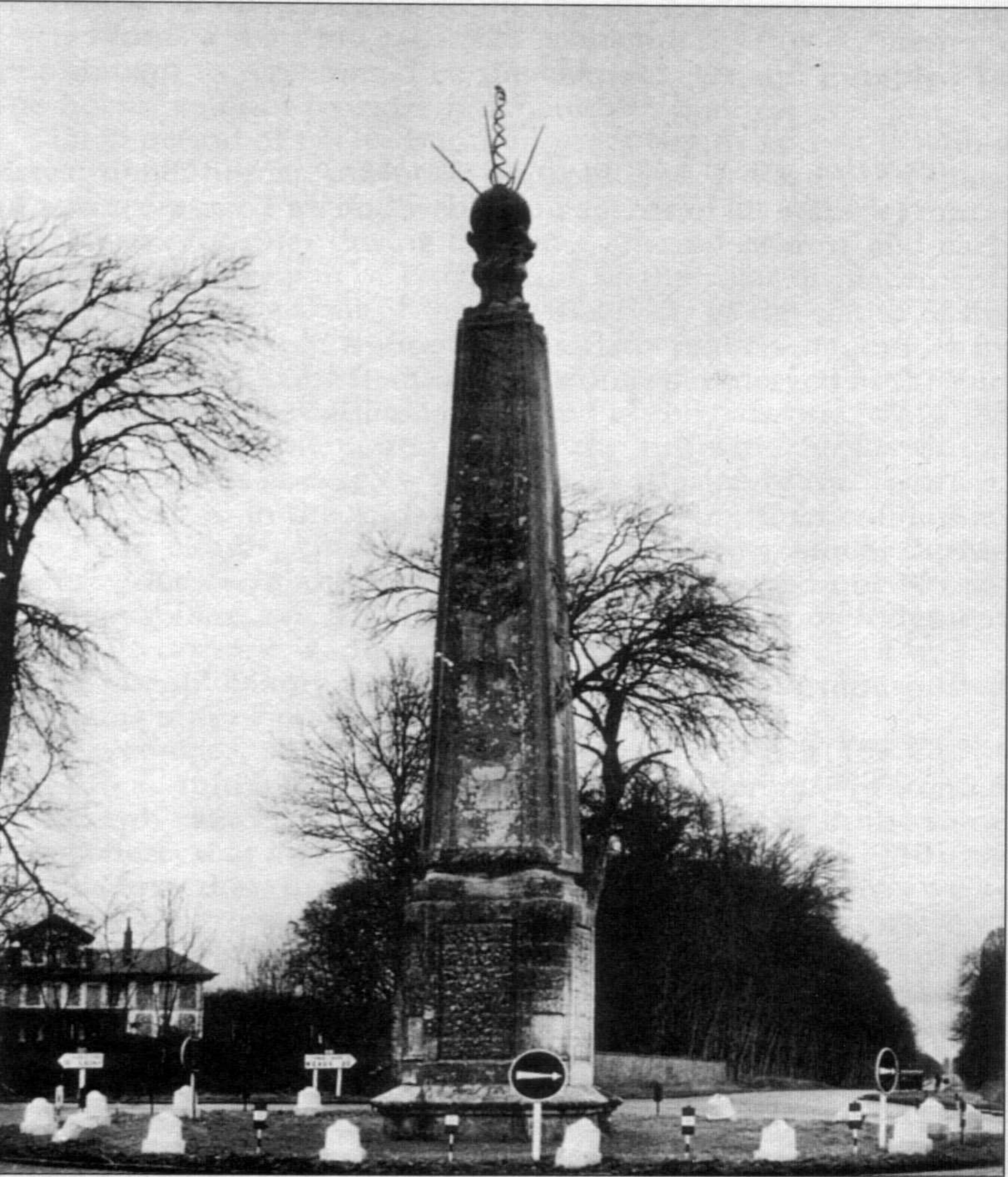
Erected upon a mound, at the culminating point of the Crecy Forest (altitude 134 meters), the obelisk towers above the surroundings, and, by the openings of the forest roads, can be glimpsed from afar. The spot it is in was admirably chosen. It occupies the center of a geometrically regular crossing, formed by the intersection of three roads, which gives it the appearance of a radiating six-rayed star. So this monument seems to be erected on the place of the ancient hexagram; a figure composed of the water and fire triangles, which is used as the signature of the physical Great Work and of its result, the Philosophers' Stone.

The work, quite stylish, is made of three distinct parts: an oblong strongly built base, with a square section and rounded angles; a shaft formed by a quadrangular pyramid with chamfered edges; finally an amortisement concentrated all the interest of this building. It shows, as a matter of fact, a terrestrial globe given over to the joined forces of water and fire. Resting on the waves of a raging sea, the sphere of the world, hit on the higher pole by the sun in a helical reversal, catches fire and throws off lightnings and thunderbolts. Here is, as we said, the vivid representation of the huge conflagration and flood, equally purifying and dispensing of justice.

Two sides of the pyramid are exactly aligned on the highway's North-South axis. On the Southern side, one can notice the image of an old oak sculpted in bas-relief. According to Monsieur Pignard-Peguet ⁽⁶⁾, this oak tree was above a Latin inscription which is now hammered out. The other facets bore, as intaglio engravings, a scepter on one, a hand of justice on the other, a medallion bearing the King's coat of arms on the last one.

If we question the oak of stone, it can answer us that times are near, because it is its figurative foreboding. It is the revealing symbol of our times of decadence and perversion; and the initiate, to whom we owe the obelisk, carefully chose the oak tree as a frontispiece for his work, in the fashion of a cabalistic prologue, in charge of pinpointing in time the ill-omened period of the end of the world. The characteristics of this period, which is ours, are clearly indicated in the 24th chapter of The Gospel of St Matthew: "And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars... and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matt. 24: 6-8). These frequent geological tremors, accompanied with unexplained climatic changes, the consequences of which are propagated among the different peoples, which they worry and among the societies, which they upset, are symbolically expressed by the oak. This word, whose French pronunciation (*chene*) is lisped, phonetically corresponds to the Greek word [*520-1] (*Khen*), and designates the common goose. The old oak tree, because of this fact, takes on the same value as the expression the old goose and the secret meaning of the old law ⁽⁷⁾, heralding the return of the Ancient Covenant or of the Reign of God.

The Tales of Mother Goose ⁽⁸⁾ (mother law, primary law) are hermetical narratives where esoteric truths mingle with the marvelous and legendary setting of the Saturnalia, of Paradise, and of the Golden Age.



DAMMARTIN-SOUS-TIGEAUX — CRÉCY FOREST
(SEINE-ET-MARNE)

The Obelisk
Photo by Pierre Jahan

PLATE XLIII

THE GOLDEN AGE

In the time of the Golden Age, the regenerated man knows no religion. He only gives thanks to the Creator, whose sun, his most sublime creation, seems to reflect the ardent, luminous, and benevolent image. He respects, honors and venerates God in this radiating globe which is the heart and brain of Nature and the dispenser of earthly goods. Visible representative of the Lord, the Sun is also the tangible evidence of his power, of his greatness, and of his goodness. In the midst of the radiating celestial body, under the pure sky of a rejuvenated earth, man admires the divine works, without outer manifestations, without rites, without veils. Contemplative, and ignorant of need, desire and suffering, he holds toward the master of the Universe this touching and deep gratitude that simple souls possess, and this boundless affection that binds the son to the Father. The Golden Age, a solar age par excellence, has for cyclic symbol the very image of the celestial body, the hieroglyph that has always been used by the old alchemists, in order to express the metallic gold or mineral sun. On the spiritual level, the Golden Age is personified by the evangelist St Luke. The Greek [*520-2] (*Luchas*), from [*520-3] (*Luchnos*), light, lamp, torch, *lucis* in Latin), brings us to consider the Gospel according to Luke, as the Gospel according to the Light. It is the Solar Gospel esoterically conveying the journey of the celestial body and that of its rays, back to their primary state of splendor. It marks the dawn of a new era, the exaltation of the radiating power over the regenerated earth and the return of the yearly and cyclical orb ([*521-1] --- *Lucabas* --- in Greek inscriptions, meaning year). St Luke has for the attribute the bull or winged ox, a spiritualized solar figure, the emblem of the vibratory and luminous movement, brought back to viable living conditions of animated beings.

This happy and blessed time of the golden age, during which Adam and Eve lived in a state of simplicity and ignorance, is designated under the name of Earthly Paradise. The Greek word [*520-2] (*Paradeisos*), paradise, seems to derive from the Persian or Chaldean root of *Pardes*, which means delicious garden. At least, it is in the sense that it is used by the Greek authors, in particular by Xenophoros and Diodorus of Sicily, to qualify the magnificent gardens that the Kings of Persia used to possess. The same meaning is applied by the Seventy in their translation of Genesis (Ch. II, v. 8), to the marvelous stay of our first parents. Men have wanted to find on which geographical part of the globe, God had placed this Eden with an enchanting setting. The hypotheses do not agree much with one another on this point; thus, some writers such as Philo the Jew and Origenus cut the discussion short by claiming that the earthly Paradise, as Moses describes it, never had any physical existence. According to them it is appropriate to understand in an allegorical sense everything ascribed to it in the Scriptures.

All the same, we consider accurate all the descriptions that have been made of the earthly Paradise, or, if you prefer, of the golden age; but we are not going to dwell on the various theses aimed at proving that the refuge, inhabited by our ancestors, was located in one well defined country. Of we deliberately don't specify where it was located, it is only because, during each cyclic revolution, there is only one thin belt left, that is respected and which remains fit for habitation on its earthly soil. However we emphasize it, the zone of salvation and mercifulness is located sometimes in the Northern Hemisphere, in the beginning of the cycle, sometimes in the Southern Hemisphere, at the beginning of the next cycle.

Let's recapitulate. The earth, as everything that lives from it, in it and through it, has its foreseen and determined time, its evolutionary times rigorously fixed, established, separated

by as may inactive periods. It is therefore condemned to die, in order to be born again and these temporary lives occurring between its regeneration, or birth, and mutation, or death, are called Cycles by most of the ancient philosophers. The cycle then is the time separating two convulsions of the earth of the same order, which are accomplished after a complete revolution of the Great Circular Period, divided into four epochs of equal duration, which are the four Ages of the World. These four divisions of the life of the earth succeed one another according to the rhythm which forms the solar year: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. Thus the cyclical ages correspond to the seasons of the annual seasonal movement, and they, as a whole, the names of Great Period, Great Year, and even more frequently, Solar Cycle.

END

(1) In Greek, *Arara*, or *Arera*, perfect tense of *ararisko* means *to be attached, fixed, stopped, firm, immutable*.

(2) Translator's note: Rainbow in French is *arc-en-ciel*, literally the Ark in the Heaven.

(3) Rene Basset: *Apocryphes Ethioiens (Apocryphal Writings from Ethiopia)*, Paris, Bibliotheque de la Haute Science, 1899, Ch. 14, v. 1-6.

(4) Ezekiel, chap. 327-9, 15, The Lamentation for Pharoah.

(5) II Peter 3:3-7, 10, 13.

(6) *Histoire Generale des Departmentes, Seine-et-Marne (Illustrated History of the French Departments, Seine-et-Marne)*, Auguste Gout et Cie., Orleans, 1911, p. 249.

(7) Translator's note: in French *veille oie* (old goose) and *vielle loi* (old law) have almost the same pronunciation.

(8) Translator's note: In French "Les contes de ma mere l'oie". My mother the goose and my mother the law, sound exactly the same.

APPENDICES

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Long considered a chimera, alchemy appears to the scientific world more and more every day. The words of scientists on the constitution of matter and their recent discoveries show and give evidence of the dissociation potential of chemical elements. Nowadays, no one any longer doubts that the elements, once regarded as simple, are in fact any partisans. The deceptive concept of inertia disappears from the Universe, and that which only yesterday seemed heresy has today become dogma. With an impressive uniformity of action, but in varying degrees, life manifests itself in the three kingdoms of nature, once clearly separated, and among which there is no longer any distinction made. Origin and vitality are shared by the triple group of the ancient classification. Crude substance proves to be animate. Beings and things evolve, progress through constant transformations and new beginnings. Through the multiplicity of their exchanges and combinations, they separate themselves from the original unity, only to resume their original simplicity under the influence of decompositions. Sublime harmony of the great Totality, immense circle through which the Spirit goes in its eternal activity and which has for center the unique living fragment, emanating from the creative Logos.

And so, after having strayed from the correct path, modern science seeks to rejoin it, progressively adopting ancient concepts. Much like successive civilizations, human progress obeys the inescapable law of perpetual renewal. Though it be against all, Truth always triumphs, in spite of its slow, painful, and tortuous advance. Sooner or later common sense and simplicity gets the better of sophistry and prejudices. "For there is nothing", the Gospel teaches, "which cannot be discovered and nothing so secret that it cannot be known". (Matt. 10:26).

Yet, we should not believe that traditional science, whose elements Fulcanelli assembled, has been adapted for the general public in the present work. The author makes no such pretense. He would greatly delude himself who hoped to understand the secret doctrine after a simple reading. "Our books have not been written for all", repeat the old masters, "though all are called upon to read them". For each one of us must contribute his personal effort which is definitely essential if he wants to acquire the notions of a science which has never ceased to be esoteric. This is why the philosophers, aiming to hide its principles from the masses, have concealed the ancient knowledge in the mystery of words and the veil of allegories.

The ignoramus will not so easily forgive alchemists their allegiance to the rigorous discipline they have freely accepted. I know my master cannot shun this same criterion. Before all, he had to respect the divine will, giver of light and revelation. He also owed obedience to the philosophers' law which imposes upon initiates the necessity of inviolable secrecy.

In antiquity, and especially in Egypt, primordial submission applied to all branches of science and the industrial arts. Potters, enamellers, goldsmiths, foundry workers, worked inside of temples. The working personnel, of workshops and laboratories were part of the priestly class and answered directly to the priests. From the Middle Ages up to the 19th century history shows us numerous examples of similar organizations in chivalry, the monastic orders, freemasonry, trade guilds, etc., many professional associations jealously guarded the secrets of their science or their trades; they always maintained a mystical or symbolic character, kept

traditional customs, and practiced religious ethics. We know the tremendous respect which the gentlemen glassworkers enjoyed with kings and princes, and to which extent they took care to prevent the circulation of the secrets specific to the noble industry of glassmaking.

These exclusionary rules have a profound reason. If I were to be asked, I would simply say that the privilege of science should remain the prerogative of a scientific elite. The most beautiful discoveries prove to be more harmful than useful once they have fallen into the popular domain, and are distributed without discernment to the masses and blindly exploited by them. Man's nature pushes him voluntarily towards evil and the worse. More often than not, that which could bring him well-being turns to his disadvantage and eventually becomes the instrument of his ruin. Methods of modern warfare are, alas! The most striking and the saddest proof of this disastrous state of mind. *Homo homini lupus* (Man is wolf to man). For the mere reason that they used overly obscure language, it would be unfair in the face of so serious a danger to bury the memory of our great ancestors under a reprobation that they do not deserve.. Must we condemn them all and despise them, only for the fact that they showed too much restraint? By shrouding their works in silence and their revelations in parables, the philosophers acted wisely. Respectful of social institutions, they harm no one and ensure their own safety.

Allow me, on this topic, a simple anecdote.

An admirer of Fulcanelli was once conversing with one of our best chemists and asked for his opinion on metallic transmutation.

"I believe it is possible", said the scientist, "though its realization is rather doubtful".

"And, if some sincere witness certified that he had seen it, and if he brought you a categorical proof", replied the master's friend, "what would you think?".

Answered the chemist: "I would think that such a man should be mercilessly hounded and suppressed as a dangerous criminal".

Consequently, prudence, extreme caution, and absolute discretion appear fully justified. For, after this, who could blame Adepts for the particular style which they use in their divulgations? Who would dare to throw the first stone at the author of this book?

Yet, because of the opinion we might have formed of a teaching where clear language remains forbidden, we should not conclude that there is nothing to discover in the books of the philosophers. Much to the contrary. To be gifted with a little sagacity is sufficient to know how to read them and understand the essentials.

Among ancient authors and modern writers, Fulcanelli is without doubt the most sincere and the most convincing. He establishes the hermetic theory on a solid basis, supports it with evident analogical facts, and then presents it in a simple and precise manner. To discover on what ground the principles of the art have been laid, the student, because of the clear and firm development, only needs to make a few efforts. He will even be able to accumulate a great number of the necessary pieces of knowledge. Thus equipped, he will then be able to attempt this great work and leave the speculative domain for that of positive realizations.

From this moment on, he will encounter the first difficulties, and he will have to clear numerous and practically insurmountable obstacles. There is not a researcher who doesn't

know these stumbling blocks, these insurmountable limits against which I myself, several times, nearly failed. Of this, my master has kept the permanent memory, even more than I did. Much like Basil Valentine, his true initiator, he was held in check without being able to find a solution for more than 30 years!

Fulcanelli elaborated on the practical details much further than anyone else, out of charity for the workers, his brothers, in order to help them vanquish these trying causes of interruption. His method is different from that employed by his predecessors; it consists in describing in detail all the operations of the Work. After having divided them into several fragments. He thus takes each of the phases of the Work, begins its explanation in a chapter, interrupts it to continue it in another, and completes it in a final passage. This parceling out, which turns the Magistry into a philosophical puzzle, will not frighten the educated investigator; but it quickly discourages the layman, incapable of finding his way in this labyrinth of a different nature, and unqualified to uncover the correct sequence of the manipulations.

Such is the essential interest of this book which Fulcanelli presents to the cultivated reader, called upon to judge the work according to its value, according to its originality, or perhaps to appreciate it according to its merit.

Finally, I would feel I had overlooked something if I did not mention the remarkable and splendid drawings of the painter, Julien Champagne. This excellent artist is worthy here, again, of the greatest praise. I am also happy to extend my thanks to the editor, Monsieur Jean Schemit, whose trustworthy taste and proven competence so perfectly guided the building of the material form of the book *The Dwellings of the Philosophers*.

Eugene Canseliet

F.C.H.

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